

the FRIENDS of SAN PEDRO VALLEY PARK

BOB CASE: FLOWERS, PHOTOGRAPHY, BEAUTY



Robert Case, distinguished photographer of California native plants, will appear at the Visitor Center at **7:30pm on Saturday, March 31**, to deliver a show of exquisite beauty, using his macro lens and plenty of talent. (photo of Mariposa Lily by Robert Case)

Bob holds a Master's from San Francisco State University in ecology and systematics, and has taught at colleges in the Bay Area for 25 years. He has given programs to many organizations around S.F. We hope to see you there for a lovely, relaxing evening.

ON THE TRAIL-Sightings

Letter from Laurie Nikitas:

On January 5, east end of the Hazelnut, I saw the first flowers of 2007--**Milk Maids** (right). **Nightshade** has been out for weeks, as has **currant** [pink flowering currant], so we (**Ray, Katie and I**) thought these were truly the first.



Also that day, [at] that end--**manroot** vines are snaking across the path while their leaves start to open, **Cynoglossum** [hound's tongue] (left) is up but far from blooming, and there was one wacky



huckleberry blooming already.

Farther up, **pitcher sage** (right), one of the most divine smells in the world, has put out leaves and the



silk tassels (left) are sending off great plumes of pollen. Not much animal action besides the **deer** [**Mila and Adrian Stroganoff** saw 14 in the fields of Weiler Ranch in early Dec.], but there has been a pretty consistent



and calm **Bobcat**, from the Walnut picnic area to the meadows along Weiler Ranch. As for **trillium**, to answer **Dr Mackey**, there is one with a fat bud just over the bridge to the W.Hazelnut, so any day now.

First Trillium sighted on the Hazelnut Trail, 14 days after the above letter was written, by the one and same, **Laurie Nikitas**. She said it was under a large oak just uphill from the largest elderberry tree in the park and that it had first bloomed a few days ago.

(All photos in this article courtesy of Mike Vasey's Montara Mt. w.s.)

("On the Trail" continued on page 4)

THE FRIENDS BAG DEER EXPERT!

Dr. Dale McCullough, arguably the most renowned deer expert in California, will appear at our Visitor Center on **Sat. April 7 at 8pm**. McCullough has told us that "I would prefer to give my deer talk that is a medley of research studies (about deer), and case histories (about deer in collision with people's aspirations and cars). I would include deer biology, urban deer studies and why deer love gardeners and gardeners hate deer, Angel Island wars over deer management, & **Sika deer** in Japan that are doing a better job taking the country apart than Godzilla ever hoped to, etc"



Dr. McCullough has been a professor of Wildlife Biology at UCB for many years, and has also taught at the University of Michigan. His studies and research have been on population dynamics, behavior, conservation, and management of large mammals—carnivores and herbivores. He has also traveled and studied populations such as those of the **Pandas** in Asia. His research studies have involved **Big Horn Sheep, Tule Elk, and Coyotes**.

OUR EARTH DAY APRIL 21ST-NATURE & EATS

Come join the other "Friends of San Pedro Valley Park" **Sat, Ap. 21 at 12 noon** for the Earth Day Barbeque! We provide the hamburger meat and hot dogs, and have a master outdoor chef, **Ed Decker**, manning the grill. You are requested to bring a salad, dessert or some of the trimmings. Call **Jean Leonard** at 359-7485 if you are going to take part in this little "fiesta".



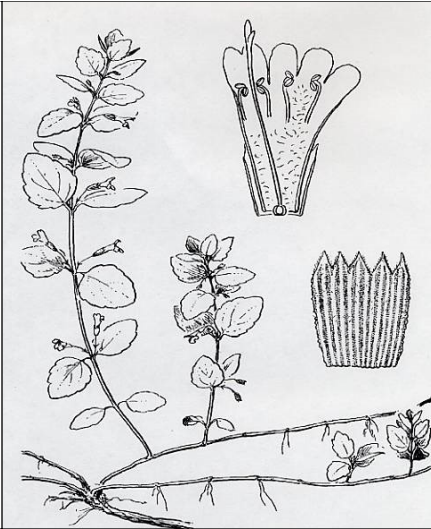
There will also be various hikes for the general public; one will be a popular hike to look at the birds and nature in the Park, led by **Jim Mackey** from 10:30am till 11:30, another an expert and fun spring wildflower hike up the Trout Farm trail, led by **Shirley Drye** at 1pm. It is possible that there will be changes or additions to the hikes, so please watch for the flyer that **Nick Ramirez**, the volunteer coordinator, will put out. In general activities will last until at least 3pm.

Nick has planned for information tables for several groups, probably including the Creek Coalition, the Yerba Buena Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, etc.

YERBA BUENA

SATUREJA DOUGLASII

*Illustration by
Jeanne R. Janish,
"Vascular Plants of the
Northwest"*



EARLY SPRING'S FLOWER FOR 2007

Would you care for a cup of tea? Specifically would you like a cup from our lovely native ground cover, **Yerba Buena**? The aromatic, minty leaves make this sound like a tempting offer, but I've never tried such a brew myself. I might be content to pinch off and taste a leaf from one of the leaves of the plants in our Native Shade or Native Sun Garden, but I think I'll pass for now and take other's words that it is delicious. After all, there is some disagreement, as the deer are not overly fond of this strongly scented plant; maybe I'll stick with them, though some native Americans felt differently.

I found on the **Ohlone** website that these Indians favored a strong tea of our plant to alleviate toothache, or sometimes the warmed leaves were held against the outer jaw. In more recent years "a decoction of the plant has been used to get rid of stomach problems, pinworms, etc."

Finding no other beings who used the aromatic leaves, I was happy to see that some of the native bees, especially those **dwarf carpenter bees** of the **genus Ceratina**, pollinate this lovely white flower, receiving their own special nutrition in return.. (photo of a *Ceratina* - Tom Murray)



Unfortunately the appellation, Yerba Buena, was not favored when it came to naming our favorite city on the tip of our peninsula, and now we are stuck with the oft used name of yet another saint, instead of that of this minute and delicate flower. But we can remember the time when we were "Yerba Buena", point to the island in the Bay of that name, the Yerba Buena Gardens, & find other such namesakes all around us.

Please notice the large amount of Yerba Buena "crawling" through the floor of both of our native plant gardens; this is an excellent ground cover for your own yard.

CRACKERJACK QUARTET ATTACKS EUCS

First, kudos to **Cheryl Broock** and **Marissa Shaff**, those 2 women who joined our loyal team of 2—**Jim Mackey** and **Jim Pommier**, in doing some powerful work in January, removing mainly eucalyptus sprouts but also small trees by the Valley View trailhead. Jim Pommier was wielding the Pulaski (left); hand saws were also used to remove this tireless invader.



I recall how much time & effort it took to remove the sprouts from one eucalyptus stump in my yard. Anyway, our group's hope is that if they are persistent and they keep the sun's energy, as captured by the green stems and leaves, from feeding the roots, the below ground energy will finally play itself out, as did mine. However, they will always have dozens of set of roots, hundreds of shoots, & the trees to challenge them.

TO HELP OUR NATIVE PLANTS

On February 17, **Kate Antista** spent 5 hours tending to the native sun and shade gardens, weeding around the plants she loves, raking and sweeping. **Jim Pommier** removed and pruned some of the rangier natives, but the call of the "**pampas**" was too much for him. He bade goodbye to Katie, and marched up the western part of the Valley View trail not too far from the trailhead; there he liberated the Park of three small and 1 large prolific pampas breeder.

NOT on Trail Days—late February CHALLENGE

Hal Jorgensen introduced our young new trail worker, **David de Vasquez**, to special SPVP trail work last month. The pair sawed down possibly 2 dozen **eucalyptus trees** with chain and hand saws on the Valley View trail. Hal's arms were cut up because it was a matter of sawing and pushing one's body up through the shaggy prickly chaparral to get to the "prize". He said he had been engaging in a fruitless search for deer trails, and couldn't figure out how they were able to get to their browsing plants. David, who was the member of the pair who is somewhat allergic to **poison oak**, made sure to use the Tecnu after slicing through the formidable, heavy growth.



AND THEN THERE WERE THREE

It was February trail days. The rain kept some of the more sensible or skeptical home, but not stalwarts **Hal Jorgensen**, **Art Armstrong** and **Paden Grey**, who found the perfect place to get wet but not muddy was the sidewalk by the shop, which was overrun by weeds, and they attacked them with gusto.

NATURALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

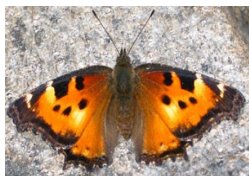
By Jim Mackey

A tale of two winters. Last winter (2005-2006) will be remembered for excessive rain and violent storms. One of our Park's several major Coast live oaks was up-rooted (along the Hazelnut Trail). However in early February it was dry and sunny with the temperature reaching 70°F. These were the conditions on Feb 8 when I enjoyed a stroll in shirt sleeves, on the Weiler Ranch Road. An unusually large number of butterflies contributed to the summery atmosphere. These

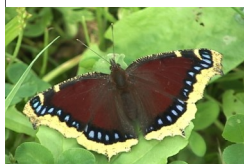


were medium-sized orange butterflies, and I assumed that they were our common **Satyr angle-Wing** (photo by Ian Lane). However over the next couple of days I did see a few angle-wings, which contrasted with the more numerous species, that I identified as **California tortoiseshells**

(photo at right). The last time that I had seen tortoiseshells was in August 2004 at Donner Summit. I had been alerted by an article in the Reno Gazette that millions of these butterflies were migrating south along the crest of the Sierra Nevada. Motorists were pulling into gas stations to have dead butterflies, that they called "suicide butterflies", cleaned from their windshields.



This January (2007) was sunny but with a cold, dry northerly wind. I saw virtually no butterflies in the Park until Feb. 3, when I spotted a large, purplish **mourning cloak** (photo at left) patrolling the Trout Farm



Trail. This gave me special pleasure because I had seen a mourning cloak in the same place on Feb. 10, 2006, and I grew up in Ohio expecting mourning cloaks to be the first active butterflies

each spring. I needed to be reassured that there is some degree of predictability and stability in nature. (Mourning cloaks appear early in spring because they overwinter as adults, rather than pupae.) However a more memorable event this winter in our Park has been the wintering of several **Varied Thrushes**!

On January 20, **Katie Antista** told me that she had seen a Varied Thrush in the vicinity of the Visitor Center. This species breeds in redwood forests from Humboldt County north and in forests of other conifers on into Alaska. It winters irregularly into central California. On Jan. 25 I was elated to see a male and

a female Varied Thrush foraging on the lawn by our horse-shoe courts. Then on Jan. 30 my wife, Joyce, and I were buoyed by an encounter, on the Plaskon Trail, with the ebullient veteran birder: **Bess Nericcio**. She was searching for **Varied Thrushes** because she had been reading e-mails on a birding web site that reported many of these birds over the Bay Area. I told her that I had seen them in the vicinity of the horseshoe courts, so Bess hurried along in that direction while we continued into the parking lot—where we spotted a beautiful, largely orange male glowing in the sun in an alder—over Bess' car (pg. 4 is a picture of the male Varied Thrush)

Poor Jim's Almanac. Now is the time to enjoy our preeminent wildflower trail—the Hazelnut, check-out the **trilliums, adders' tongues & iris**. Listen near the creeks for the "chi-chi-chit chet" of returning **Wilson's warblers** in late Mar, & for the melodious song of **grosbeaks** in mid-Apr. As the late **Cliff Richer** said, "Now is the season to listen to the Park."

TRAIL WORK IN THE "YUKON"

By Joseph Piro

This morning [Sat. Jan13th] when the regular crew of **myself, Ed Decker, Art Armstrong, Hal Jorgenson and Jim Pommier** arrived around 8am, **Ranger Doug** — who, like me, was sporting a wool beanie -- pointed out on the thermometer in the Visitor Center lobby it was just **31 degrees (!)**. After some doughnuts and hot coffee and hot chocolate, the 5 of us headed out for the job -- rake the trail winding thru the eucalyptus forest at the top of Hazelnut Trail.



While hiking along it was fun crunching thru patches of frosty dirt and we all enjoyed the crystal-clear views of the Peninsula and north to the Marin Headlands and far beyond. While raking the heavy amounts of leaves, acorns and branches off the trail up there was certainly the highlight — it looked perfect when we left—we also cut down a few less-than-8-foot-overhead branches along the way & dug up some "tripping hazard" roots.



And when we arrived back down at the Visitor Center right around noon, I checked the thermometer again & it had climbed to around 46.

FACTOID

Something to think about as the little birds are hatching this spring: **Baby Robins** eat 14 feet of **earthworms** a day, but is this night crawlers of the East or our modest little worms? (source-factoidcentral.com)

ON THE TRAIL (continued)

Katie Antista and **Ray Trabucco** saw a lovely vision, a **Varied Thrush**, near the back pathway to the shade garden.

Jim Mackey saw one on January 25th at about 1pm on the lawn by the horseshoe pits.

(photo by Mike Yip) **Judy Spitler** saw a **Varied Thrush**, this one on February 3, & reported that there is an influx of these thrushes in San Mateo County this year in particular.



Judy Spitler also sighted a **Brown Creeper** (Paul Noll drawing right) and a flock of **Golden Crowned Kinglets** (Vemta Wildlife Society Photo-left) in

the Park on Jan 1; neither one is very common in SPVP. She said that the **Wilson's Warbler**, a common seasonal bird, has made a very early appearance this



Brown Creeper
L 5.25"

MACKEY'S MAGIC

Jim Mackey again gave us a picture of the park that no one else has—a **Band-tailed Pigeon** fledgling sunning itself in the sun garden, a **Mourning Cloak** butterfly, the lovely **Varied Thrush**. Mackey's observations of special kind of large, **darkly banded garden spider** brought us the short saga of the spider's lair, the spinning of her web—a brief but meaningful life. Jim played recordings of bird calls from Jim Steele's "birds of SPVP"

The diets of such omnivores as the **fox** at different times of the year were obvious in his "content of scats" photos—berries or "**mice**". Jim presented some of the strategies of meat & plant eaters with his photos from Africa.

Among our guests was our returning life time volunteer, **Nancy Jewett**, also known as Ms. Hemlock for the valiant work she did in removing that poisonous pest. Thanks go to **Jim Pommier, Katie Antista, & Shirley Drye** for expediting the "program support".

I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.

John Muir, 1913



MARCH—APRIL CALENDAR

MARCH TRAIL DAY

Saturday, March 10.....8am

MARCH GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, March 14.....7pm

MARCH NATIVE PLANT DAY..... 9am

Saturday, March 17

R. CASE-NATIVE CA FLOWER PHOTOGRAPHY

Saturday, March 31.....7:30pm

DR. DALE McCULLOUGH-DEER EXPERT

Saturday, April 7.....8pm

APRIL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, April 11.....7pm

APRIL TRAIL DAY

Saturday, April 14.....8am

APRIL NATIVE PLANT DAY

Saturday, April 21..... 9am

EARTH DAY CELEBRATION & BARBEQUE

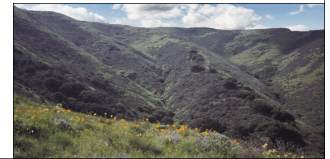
Saturday, April 21.....12noon

For all events meet at the Visitor Center.

Coming soon: Flight in Birds: Alan Ridley & Helen McKenna on Sat., May 5. Follow-up hike Sat. May 19

BATCHELDER did an in DEPTH SAN BRUNO MT.

On Jan. 20, 30 some people appeared to hear **Philip Batchelder** get into the nitty gritty about this island of diversity in the midst of cities. Philip told us about some endangered shell mound & burial grounds for the Ohlone Indians, told us about the importance of fire in reclaiming areas for many native plants. He also got into the politics of the matter, how who was at the stern of governmental entities really mattered. But quite unexpected was the news that a **mountain lion** has been seen repeatedly near the picnic grounds. A **deer** has also been seen on the mountain recently. Where these 2 large animals came from is a mystery!



ADDITIONS and/or CORRECTIONS

As I was talking to **Laura Siegel** the other day, the thought came to me that I had not recognized her contribution to our bulletin, her quiet poetic rendering of the perspective of deer.

Also, I failed to mention that besides the other sightings of the "masked bandit" **Jim Pommier** saw a **raccoon** in broad daylight in December 2006, crossing the Park entrance road by Rosita.

Questions or letters to the editor? email: carolynpankow@comcast.net, or C. Pankow 600 Oddstad Blvd: Pacifica, CA

The Volunteers: Valerie Patten, President; Carolyn Pankow, V.P.; Shirley Drye Secretary; Ed Decker, Treasurer; Christine Thatcher, & Jean Leonard, members at large; Hal Jorgensen, Trails; Katie Antista, Membership; Carolyn Pankow, Programs & Editor; Mila Stroganoff, Trailside store; Jean Leonard, Visitor Center; Jim Pommier, alien plant removal.