

*Our website: [friendsofsanpedrovalleypark.org](http://friendsofsanpedrovalleypark.org) Offers info on new natural history programs, recordings of past programs, info on animals and plants in SPVP, and more!*

**Webinar\* for Tues. Jan. 25, 2022, 7pm**

## **BOBCATS IN THE SF BAY AREA: A BIOLOGY & ECOLOGY OF A NATIVE MESOCARNIVORE**

**Speakers: ZARA McDONALD & ALYS GRANADOS**

**About the program:** Felidae has conducted **bobcat** re-



Trish Carney

search and conservation in the SF Bay Area since 2010. Bobcats don't receive the attention—that **mountain lions** do but they are important members of the ecosystem, and they provide

natural pest control at the urban edge around residential communities. Bobcats face numerous challenges from fragmentation of habitat and rodenticide poisoning to conflict with humans. During this presentation we will discuss bobcat biology and ecology, their status in the Bay Area, and their long-term conservation.



Felidae Conservation Fund



**About Zara McDonald:** Biologist, researcher, & entrepreneur, Zara McDonald heads Felidae Conservation Fund & has traveled extensively throughout four continents on behalf of wild felid research & conservation since '02. (Continued on p.2)

## **A NATURALIST'S WALK IN SAN PEDRO VALLEY PARK**



Sign up for a 1 & one half nature hike with J.R. Blair, who will lead a walk on Sat. Feb. 26th, at 10:30 am. The first 15 people to send a request to [friendsofsanpedrovalley@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofsanpedrovalley@gmail.com) will be eligible; others will be on a waiting list. J.R. will discuss anything interesting that catches his eye, whether **plant, animal, insect**, etc. (You'll receive mtg. location) (Continued on page 2)



**\*Zoom Webinar instructions: on bottom of page 2**

## **NATIVE TREES OF CALIFORNIA: Webinar\***

**Presented by Morgan Stickrod; February 22; 7pm.**

The California Floristic Province is home to approximately 150 species of native trees. Among these are a great number of fascinating and iconic species, including the tallest, oldest (**bristlecone pines** at rt), and largest trees on earth.



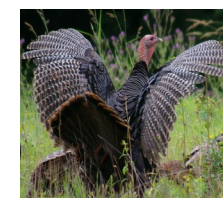
His talk will explore much of that diversity, covering some of our more speciose groups (such as **oaks** & **conifers**), as well as some of the ecological processes and contexts that have contributed to their biogeographical distributions and dynamic natural histories.

**Morgan Stickrod** graduated with a BS in Ecology, focus in Plant Biol. from the U. of No. Carolina. While living in the southern Appalachians, he worked for the Blue Ridge Parkway (NPS) developing the permanent herbarium collection & doing rare plant management work. He was also involved in several long-term research projects in Great Smoky Mts. N.P. Currently he is employed as a botanist at the S.F. Pub. Util. Commission. & previously worked at the S.F. Botanical Garden. He has been involved in many botanical projects in California, such as vegetation mapping of Southeast Farallon Island, census and monitoring of the federally endangered **Fountain Thistle** (*Cirsium fontinale*, variety *fontinale*), and occasionally does environmental consulting work & helps with CNPS rare plant surveys. (bristlecone pine & Douglas fir photos are by Mila Stroganoff.)



## **ON THE TRAIL**

On Nov. 6, at 4pm, while walking slowly down the Trout Farm Trail near the V.C., your editor saw a female **turkey** at the base of the Trail and a very few feet from her, a **doe** & **youngster**. Two prey species helping each other detect predators? But the turkey flew into the air with an aggressive posture at the deer, who made a fast exit. **Ranger Escoto** said that they often attack deer; was she protecting her eggs? (cont'd—page 4)



## Appreciating our Volunteers!

by Sharron Walker

We all have lived through a challenging year or so! Many of the Friends' volunteers hung in there, however, and kept the spirit of The Friends of San Pedro



Valley Park going!!

Special Efforts from: l to r: **Bing Huey, Alice Shirley, Mark Golembiewski, Enid Asgarius, Sharron Walker, Istvan Puski, Carl Schwab, Adrian Stroganoff**, and not pictured: **Mila Stroganoff**.

On Sat, Nov 6, we celebrated those volunteers who worked the Welcome Table, watered our Earth Day plants, kept our Natural History Programs organized, did trail work, and others who went above and beyond to help out! Our Board President, **Judy Bacon**, who suggested the event, went out of her way to recognize individuals in a unique way with specially designed t-shirts! What fun!

The Board felt that Judy deserved to be recognized, thus she was presented with a certificate acknowledging her enthusiasm, leadership and passion as the president of the Friends' Board. Although the Visitor Center was closed, we were able to meet in the Patio area. We celebrated almost like old times!

### **\*ZOOM WEBINAR INSTRUCTIONS\***

by Adrian Stroganoff

Online registration for Webinars is now available. **Go to our website**, <http://friendsofsanpedrovalleypark.org>. In the Events section you will find a link to the registration page for each webinar. There you need to **put in your name and email address to register**. You will then get a confirmation email with further instructions, and reminder emails closer to the event.

(Bobcat Webinar Program: Continued from page one)

About the speaker: **Alys Granados** is interested in using science to inform wildlife conservation strategies in partnership with diverse groups of stakeholders. She has a PhD in Zoology from the U. of British Columbia, Canada, where she used camera traps to measure the impacts of logging on wildlife in Malaysian Borneo.



Following her PhD, she returned to to work as Field Research Mngr. for Borneo's Gunung Palung Conservation Program. Most recently, Alys was a postdoc at the U. of British Columbia and worked on the effects of recreation & land use on **mammals** in W. Canada.

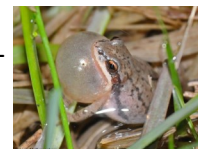
(A Naturalist's Walk in SPVP: continued from page 1)

About the leader: **J.R. Blair** has a B.A. from Washington's Evergreen State College & an M.A. from SFSU, studying with the accomplished mycologist, Dr. Dennis Desjardin. His thesis was **Fungi Associated with Arctostaphylos** in No. Calif. He was president of the Mycological Soc. of S.F. for 2 yrs. He has taught **mushroom I.D.** workshops, was a lecturer of Biol. at SFSU for 21 years & the director of SFSU's field campus for 11 years.



### **HIGHLIGHTS OF DEC. Frog Webinar with Dr. VELEZ** **the Ribbit of the Pacific Chorus Frogs**

I had no idea that so much goes on in a frog pond, or if **female chorus frogs** are attracted more to the louder sounds of certain **males**. **Dr. Alejandro Velez's** lab has found that the healthiest tadpoles with the best survival rates come from the males with the best calls, but do females really prefer the guys that have longer, louder, and faster calls? That picture is not so clear.



Alejandro widened his talk, bringing into it other frog species. He discussed the **American bullfrogs**, who can get quite choosy over who is nearby; strangers will not be tolerated, and they can tell the size of a foreign rival by the pitch of the call. Neighbors get a better reception. But one of the most fascinating revelations of this talk is that while frogs of many species might be calling for their ladies at the same time, each species has its own call frequency,

(continued on page 5)



## A SURPRISE IN BUDAPEST: Personal Focus

By Our President, Judy Bacon

A good friend of mine said she was going on an OAT cruise trip on the Danube River from Budapest to the Black Sea in March, 2016, and asked if I wanted to go. Why not? I was not prepared for the beauty & history of Budapest, one name for 2 parts of a city split up by the Danube River.

My traveling companions were Jewish, so we went to Synagogues & saw some very moving exhibits of Hungarian Holocaust memorials, including the exhibit of shoes along the Danube and the **weeping willow** shape of the Emanuel Tree of Life, with the names of Holocaust victims inscribed on its metal leaves. What a sight!

Our group also visited a very large indoor market on the Pest side that sold just about everything. At dinnertime, we realized that at least five of us had bought the same sweater there that was "such a steal"!



That night we sailed along the Danube going up on deck to look at the beautiful lighting that is just as lovely, if not more so, than Paris. We stood there looking at the beautiful lit up buildings & listening to the noisy **kittiwakes**.

(Photo above from jimzglebeblog)

No trip is complete without visiting the **Lipizzaner** stables and seeing the **pale gray mares** with their little **black foals**. They are born black and turn color as they mature. We were also treated to an exhibition of the Hungarians who ride and train these beautiful horses! (photo of mare with foal from [Lipizzane.org](http://Lipizzane.org))



Our biggest surprise came when our little group walked over to the Buda side across the Danube River where many of the old churches are. There, standing on the street was a

man in a Hungarian costume holding a beautiful **Golden Eagle**. I asked if I could take his picture and he said for six forints, I could hold the bird. It's a deal! I gave him the money and he gave me the bird. He was majestic & even more so when he spread out his wings. So beautiful! As my friends were taking all kinds of pictures, the bird got too heavy to hold, and I had to give him back.

Being an animal person, this was the highlight of my trip! We then went over the Carpathian Mountains to visit Dracula's castle, but that's a story for another time. (And your trips, with their nature highlights?)



## AFTER THE DELUGE: BEHOLD THE DRAIN DIGGERS

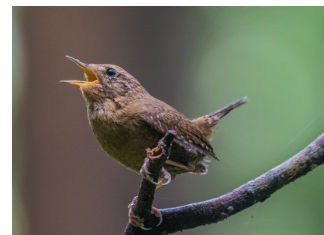
by Joseph Piro

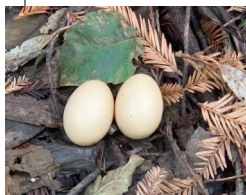
After the recent drenching the Park took on Oct. 24, **Istvan Puski**, my brother **Erik** and I decided to do some drain dip duty for our November 13, Trail Day. We took a trusty rake, McLeod & mattock & headed off for the popular Old Trout Farm/Brooks Falls Trail loop, and thankfully didn't find too many trouble spots. We then decided to check things at the start of the Hazelnut Trail behind the Visitor Center, and that's where we found a good amount of work, including raking wet leaves off the wooden footbridge, clearing leaves out of the big drainage pipe & digging out lots of built-up leaves and silty debris from drain dips along the first few switchbacks. Head out for a walk and look and listen to all the clear water running in the creek! (below: **Joseph Piro** photo of brother **Eric** & **Istvan** working on drainage in the muck & the mire.)



## PACIOID

Do **birds** sing because they are happy & are they are happy because they sing, or is it all a matter of attracting mates and defending territories, communicating with mates, etc? **Carl Safina**, science journalist, in his 2020 book, "Becoming Wild", feels that the evidence showing that song birds, who release dopamine when they sing and opiates as a reward, are obviously singing as much for pleasure as you do when you sing in the shower. (**Pacific Wren** photo by **Mike Reinhart**)



**ON THE TRAIL** (cont. from p 1)

**Sharron Walker** found these 2 **turkey eggs** on some **redwood litter** near the junction of Trout Farm Tr. with Brooks Creek. Two days later she still did not see Mom around.

**Bing Huey's** shot of SPVP's most beautiful winter bird,



**Townsend's Warbler**, is from the Hazelnut Tr. On Oct. 8, 2021.

**CROWS VS PEREGRINE FALCON: Bird Behavior**

A friend & her **bird-loving** daughter recently moved into a house with a huge yard in the Central Valley. Their garden, seeds and water features attract a wide array of avians, including a favorite large **crow**. In October, a **Peregrine Falcon** easily dispatched a few **mourning doves** as they came to feed, undoubtedly alarming this "queen" crow, who then collected 3 or 4 friends, who then attempted to intimidate the predator. They were not taken seriously by the well armed bird-killer.

The following day, when the large Covid leader flew in, she had recruited over one dozen reinforcements. The Peregrine took flight as the crows neared and pursued the falcon for a bit.



As the odds of a "murder of crows" defeating a Peregrine are

about 8 to one, I'd say this falcon had made a wise move. A week later 10 crows gathered in a tree; was the falcon nearby? (photo from nhptv.org)

Also much more to find out about birds in SPVP. 22 yrs ago, **Jim Pommier**, trail man, witnessed a **Scrub Jay** resting on the back of a **mule deer** while pecking at its neck. What bird behavior have you seen lately in SPVP?

**JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2021 CALENDAR****JANUARY TRAIL DAY**

Saturday, January 8.....9am

**JANUARY HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**

Saturday, January 15.....10am

**McDONALD, GRANADOS: Bay A. BOBCATS Webinar\***

Tuesday, January 25.....7pm

**FEBRUARY TRAIL DAY**

Saturday, February 12.....9am

**FEBRUARY HABITAT RESTORATION DAY**

Saturday, February 19.....10am

**MORGAN STICKROD'S CALIFORNIA TREES Webinar\***

Tuesday, February 22.....7pm

**J.R. BLAIR'S SPVP NATURE HIKE**

Saturday February 26.....10:30

**SUNDAY "WELCOME TABLES" .....check website**

**\*Webinar info at bottom of page 2. (For all other events, meet at the Visitor Center.)**

**DEEP FOREST DETAIL**

by **Joseph Piro**

For our December 11, 2021 Trail Day **Istvan Puski**, my brother **Erik** and I headed up our favorite Old Trout Farm/Brooks Falls Trail loop to work on a small project Istvan suggested -- clearing out some of the overgrown vegetation covering the small, old stone retaining wall near the bench below the old foundation. In addition to trimming the **plants** and straightening some of the stones, we also went up to the small footbridge and cleared debris on either side to hopefully keep water flowing well under it. Just some nice little bits of work to keep this quiet, deep forest corner of the park enjoyable. Enjoy the trails and Happy Holidays to all! (Joseph Piro photo)



**The Leaders of "the Friends of SPVP":** President: **Judy Bacon**; Vice President: **Mark Golembiewski**; Secretary: **Enid Ansgarius**; Treasurer: **Susan Kern**; Vis. Cntr. Shift Coordinator: **Carl Schwab**; Habitat Restoration Leader: **Istvan Puski**; Trail Leader: **Joseph Piro**; Membership Director: **Adrian Stroganoff**; Director of Programs and field trips: **Mila Stroganoff**; Zoom Webinar Program Coordinators: **Mila & Adrian Stroganoff**; Director of Hospitality: **Judy Bacon**; Directors of Website Management: **Lakshmi Javadekar & Jayesh Kapoor**; Trailside Store Manager: **Melinda Moses**; Newsletter Editor: **Carolyn Pankow** (pankowinca@gmail.com); newsletter proofreading & mailing: **Adrian and Mila Stroganoff**; -members-at-large: **Bing Huey, Sharron Walker**; Vol. Contributor: **Katie Antista**; member misc.

Our organization's website is : **friendsofsanpedrovalleypark.org**



## ON A NATURE JOURNALING TRAIL: MUSHROOMS

by Sharron Walker

Now that we've had rain, **mushrooms** and other **fungi** are making a great show in the park, sparking the curiosity of our SPVP Journaling group. So naturally we've been hunting them (photo at left), drawing them, (See **Caitlin Corley's** journal page at right.) researching, photographing some (**Carl Schwab** & an **Amanita** below), and reporting on them at



our most recent, the Dec. 4, meeting. At that time we found a **cup fungus**, at least 2 of the **Amanitas**, and the fungi that are vital to wood decomposition, **bracket fungi**, which are polypores, a group of fungi that have large fruiting bodies with pores or tubes on the underside, like the showy **turkey tail** that we see on logs and branches. (photo at right—T.F. Trail. We hoped that others we found might be identified by **J.R. Blair** on his mushroom hike. Wonder what our journalers are up to? Drop by our meeting on Thurs., Jan. 6, in the new year!



## J. Dumbacher's POISONOUS BIRDS: Webinar of 11/9/21

by Bing Huey

For Cal Acad. of Sciences ornithologist, **Jack Dumbacher**, our 2nd time speaker, finding a poisonous bird in nature opened up an entire area of research. After handling the stunningly attractive and colorful **hooded pitohui** of the dense New Guinea rainforests, Dumbacher and his associates who then touched the insides of their mouth, ex-



perienced stinging or numbing. Any cuts in their skin stung severely. To the natives of the area, this was part of the local lore. To Dumbacher, however, questions about the chemistry, physiology, source, and function of the toxin needed answers. (**Hooded Pitohui**—animaladayblogspot.com)

Chemical analyses revealed the toxin to be a steroidal alkaloid neurotoxin similar to that found in the skin of the **poison dart frog** of South America. Its target is the membrane-bound sodium-ion channel of nerve and muscle cells. Being similar to that in the frog, the toxin of the pitohui was also referred to as batrachotoxin (BTX).

What purpose does BTX serve, & what type of organism might it be its target? Experiments suggest that it affects insect parasites as well & potential predators like snakes. Do the birds make the toxin or get it from the environment? A small beetle known to the natives as "nanisani," when captured and preserved in alcohol, released the BTX into the preservative, suggesting that by consuming the beetle, the bird acquires the toxin.

But how does the hooded pitohui, whose tissue as well as feathers contain high levels of BTX, avoid autointoxication? It doesn't seem capable of eliminating the toxin. Experiments hint that the bird sequester's the toxin, possibly using some sort of "sponge" neutralizing protein. Studies are underway to find it.

Dr. Dumbacher didn't just describe in detail the science & experiments involved in understanding how the toxin works. He gave a fascinating look at the people of N. Guinea with whom he collaborated & what it was like to do research at the remote location (*Webinar has been recorded on the Friends website.*)



(Continued from page 2—the Ribbit of Chorus Frogs) just as different broadcasting stations have their own frequencies in order to avoid interference.

In general, frogs have 2 different organs: one for lower, one for higher frequencies, & the preferred traits of the males in these & other organs are costly to produce & must exert their price. Why? Because the resistance of a frog to parasites, for example, might be weaker if they spend too much energy crafting extremely successful complex hearing organs.

Dr. Velez emphasized how important it is to understand the stress on the frogs of living around human-generated noise. We know, as we do with birds, that if there is a high frequency interference, they will switch to using a lower frequency call & vice versa, but what we don't know is how the receivers in the brains of the females are adapting to these variations.

We have found, happily, that this chorus frog has a high resistance to the **Chytrid Fungus** devastating so many amphibians, and for work in this area he gave credit to Dr. Vance Vredenburg of SFSU. —(Soon: go to our





## J.R. BLAIR'S MUSHROOM WALK IN SPVP on DEC. 11

by Sharron Walker

A crowd of over 70 mushroom enthusiasts awaited former well- respected Biology Lecturer of SFSU, **J.R. Blair**, for this popular hike. J.R. has led many **mushroom** forays in SPVP, collecting a variety of these fungi for the SF Mycological Society's Fungus Fair. (Thanks go to **Mila Stroganoff** for organizing this hike.)



Before the walk he covered some basics: the parts of a mushroom including the cap & its spore-laden gills, the stalk, all parts of the fruiting body. But he told us that the busy part is underground—the mycelium—the vegetative mass of branching hyphae threads that we learned are so essential for root & plant vigor. Then, to identify mushrooms, J.R. told us that spores are important, and that they change color with age; spore prints can be used to identify a species; that we should check to see if the gills are attached or free, and then to make careful note mushroom color and texture, but above all, carry a good mushroom guide with you.



We then were off on a search and did not have to go far! We located several species in the parking area, including a **slime mold**. J.R. collected various finds, and laid them out on a table with some previously collected specimens when we returned. Questions flew from our group. Besides great answers, J.R. shared some of his favorite references, cautioned us against thinking we knew what was edible, and collecting without permission. You can volunteer for the Mycological Society Mushroom Fair on Jan. 23 of next year in Orinda. (Above photos by **Sharron Walker** are of Blair showing crown parts of mushroom, of the spore-containing gills under cap, & telling more about "donated" mushrooms at end of hike. You can see below that J.R. brought mushrooms as "teachers". **Sharron Walker** photo.)



J.R. With Mushroom "Teachers"



The Crowd at J.R. Blair's Mushroom Walk by Joseph Piro



# Partygoers at Volunteer Appreciation Celebration



Left to Right: Sharron Walker, Carolyn Pankow, Istvan Puski, Carl Schwab, Adrian Stroganoff, Katie Antista, Eric Piro

Back Row: Bing Huey, Bevan Jones, Alice Shirley, Mark Golembiewski, Enid Ansgarius, Susan Kern, Judy Bacon, Melinda Moses, Joseph Piro  
(photo: Walker & Piro)



Queen of the Day: President Judy Bacon receives surprise award from Vice President Mark Golembiewski





Welcome Table on December 5, by Sharron Walker  
L. to R.: Judy Bacon, Carl Schwab, Mark Golembiewski, Penney Mitchell,  
Enid Ansgarius



Mysterious activity by man (ranger?) or beast (skunk, raccoon?)  
The wasp nest was dug out of the hole; Seen on November 6,  
On the Valley View Trail by Bing Huey



# "Action in the Park after October's Big Rain"

## Sharron Walker



South Fork San Pedro Creek Flowing Profusely by Plaskon Bridge  
On October 26



Foraging Merriam's Chipmunk; 11am, October 26; Brooks Trail below Bridge. "Kept Darting Back & Forth in Front of Me"



Dark-eyed Junco on Brooks Falls Trail  
Busy foraging; Brooks Trail Below Bridge.  
"Look at His Beak!"



Bing Huey's "Action After the Deluge"; Valley View; Oct 15,



A couple days following October's deluge, I was on Valley View Trail, checking out a pool that formed on top of a large rock. There was this raft of aphids along with an ant striding atop the water, possibly trying to move these aphids to dryer ground.



Ant recovering bodies of aphids after October deluge. Perhaps it will find some of its "cows" alive. Detail of Aphids Ant's pulling can be seen





Townsend's Warbler; October 18; Hazelnut Trail



California Towhee Eating Poison Oak Berries ; December 4;  
Weiler Ranch Rd.



# Autumnal Mushrooms 2021



Ron Wilson's SPVP Mushroom  
on December 14



Sharron Walker's Shelf fungus  
Very Early November on Brooks Creek Trail



"Flat-top" Mushroom by Ron Wilson  
December 14;



Bonnet Mushroom Sharron Walker;  
Late November; Trout Farm Trail



# Mila Stroganoff's California Trees



The developing Cones and Leaves of the Douglas Fir and the Bristlecone Pine (left, right)



Older age, Middle age;  
Giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) & Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)



# Two California Monarchs in San Pedro Valley Park



Coast Live Oak\*,  
*Quercus agrifolia*;  
Nov. 28, 2021  
Hazelnut Trail near Plaskon  
by Mila Stroganoff

Coast Redwood Tree\*\* Near  
SPVP Visitor Center  
November 28, 2021,  
by Mila Stroganoff



\*Disputed as SPVP Native

\*\*Non-Native of SPVP



# Bing Huey's The Noble Turkey Vulture



American Turkey Vulture showing a wingspan of nearly 6 feet and his prized red face



Muilti-tasking Turkey Vulture



Female Turkey in SPVP Parking Lot  
November 28, 2021,  
Adrian Stroganoff



## As Autumn Progresses, a Fly and a Sparrow; Bing Huey



Drone Fly: *Eristalis syrphidae*  
Pollinating California Aster  
October 3, 2021  
Montara Mountain Trail



Golden-crowned Sparrow  
December 4, 2021  
Weiler Ranch Road,  
Greets us with its 3 note  
descending plaintive call  
every autumn after its  
summer in the North