

Valley Views

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park

March/April 2023

Upcoming Talks

A March Zoom Webinar with Loretta O'Brien "Vegetable Gardening 101"

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park welcome Loretta O'Brien, Co-founder and Director of Pacifica Gardens, who will present a lecture via Zoom on **Wednesday, March 15th, 2023 at 7 pm** entitled "Vegetable Gardening 101." She will discuss how to start a vegetable garden and how best to maintain it. She will talk about how to build a proper raised bed and how to take measures to keep out gophers. She will discuss soils, the right time to plant, and which vegetables grow best on the coast. Loretta will also add some helpful pointers about the benefits of home composting for the backyard edible garden. This should prove to be a highly informative lecture. Do join us.

Please click on the following link to register:

https://uso2web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_UC9wIgAoSiqtWkhEo9K6FQ

About the speaker: Loretta O'Brien is Co-founder and Director of Pacifica Gardens. She has been the garden manager and a part of Pacifica Gardens' leadership since its groundbreaking in 2008. Loretta is an avid gardener who has been growing fruits and vegetables on the coast for nearly 20 years. She has training in urban permaculture design and biointensive mini farming. After retirement from chiropractic practice, she started a small plant nursery, Fog Thyme, which is focused on offering veggie and herb starts that thrive on the San Mateo Coast. Loretta has a passion for successful backyard edible gardens and offers consulting services for her fellow Coastsiders.



A March Zoom Webinar by Dr. Joseph Szewczak "The Fascinating World of Bats"

On **Saturday, March 25th at 4 pm** via Zoom, Dr. Joseph Szewczak will discuss his investigations into the extraordinary physiological capabilities of bats, from cold torpor to the intense demands of flight and high altitude and bat distributions. He will also speak about the need for software to study vocalizations both in birds and bats without having to resort to invasive techniques. To successfully accomplish this, Dr. Szewczak developed SonoBat and SonoBird software. He will also discuss his new research that has led him and a team of colleagues to take samples from bats to evaluate food webs and trophic levels along the Merced and Tuolumne Rivers in Yosemite National Park. Join us for a fascinating lecture on the world of bats.



Hoary bat - photo by J. Szewczak

Arcata, California. He is a prominent name in bat research for a variety of studies, but holds the greatest distinction as the creator of SonoBat. SonoBat is a system that uses ultrasound recordings of bats to identify species, eliminating the need for the more problematic mist nets. He also created SonoBird to analyze bird vocalizations. He began working with bats 33 years ago investigating the physiology of torpor and transitioned from the lab to fieldwork and echolocation.

About the speaker: Joseph Szewczak is Professor of Biology in the Department of Biological Sciences at Cal Poly Humboldt in



Photo by Kellie Jo Brown

Register for the webinar using the following link:

https://uso2web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZNglaiXcRuG_-EVjCYTwFg

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park

600 Oddstad Blvd.
Pacifica, CA 94044
(650) 355-5454
friendsofsanpedrovalley
@gmail.com

Board of Directors

Judy Bacon, *President*
Mark Golembiewski, *Vice-President*
Enid Ansgarius, *Secretary*
Susan Kern, *Treasurer*
Adrian Stroganoff,
Membership
Mila Stroganoff, *Programs
& Field Trips*
Carl Schwab, *VC Host
Coordinator*
Melinda Moses, *Trailside
Store*
Jayesh Kapoor/Lakshmi
Javadekar, *Website*
Sharron Walker, *At-large*
Bing Huey, *At-large*
Joseph Piro, *Trail Day
Leader*
Istvan Puski, *Habitat
Restoration Day Leader*

Newsletter

Mark Golembiewski, *Editor*
Carolyn Pankow, *Editor
Emeritus*
Mila & Adrian Stroganoff,
Proofreading & Production

Visitor Center

The Friends provide
volunteer hosts to staff the
reception desk at the VC
when it is open on
Saturdays and Sundays
(only) from 10 am to 4 pm.
Our Trailside Store is open
during those hours.

Upcoming Walks

April Bird Walk in San Pedro Valley Park

April means it's time once again for springtime bird walks and our esteemed Friend and bird song identification man, **Jim Steele**, will be leading the first of two early morning walks in the park **on Saturday, April 29th** (the other will be on May 20th). He'll help us recognize which bird is announcing itself, as well as identifying them by sight, and teach us much about their behaviors.

Meet Jim at **8 am in front of the Visitor Center**. **Bring your binoculars**. It is also highly recommended that you download the free **Merlin Bird ID application** (from The Cornell Lab) onto your smart phone since Jim will be showing us how to use this wonderful and simple to use tool to identify the birds that we will encounter on our morning stroll. See you there!

Recent Field Trip

Mushroom BioBlitz in January 2023

by Mila Stroganoff

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park and the public had a wonderful opportunity to help the San Francisco Mycological Society when J.R. Blair led the Mushroom BioBlitz in the park on Saturday, January 28th. To help collect the necessary biodiversity of mushrooms needed for their Mushroom Fair held this year at Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill, our group scoured the park and collected. Collection in the park, as everyone knows, is not done except for very special reasons such as education. We found approximately 50 species of mushrooms; considered a rather low number, but it was late in the season. We did our best and so did many other groups in the Bay Area, all contributing to the same cause. Thank you all so very much for coming out and helping.



Photo by Linda Theroff

The people who gathered on the morning of January 28th were asked to be careful around hedge nettle and poison oak. J.R. Blair explained how to collect a mushroom correctly and to place it in a wax paper sandwich bag. He had purchased a large number of bags which he generously handed out to everyone. We broke out into groups and those who stayed with J.R., and I was one of them, had a fascinating hour and a half wandering the Trout Farm Trail. When we got back to the visitor center, all the collected mushrooms were placed on a table outdoors and we were all shown the full extent of everyone's efforts.

I have some terrific photos taken by Linda Theroff. I'll include some here and hope that you will consider joining us next year or more likely in December 2023.

See Linda's photos on page 9



Photo by M. Golembiewski

Our 2023 Photo Contest is Underway!

The Friends' Photo Contest has now been open to the public for entries since February 1st and will remain so until May 1st. So don't forget to bring your camera when you visit the park and look for those unforgettable shots that just might be a winning image! See our website for rules and instructions on how to submit your entries (emailed to members in early February). C'mon and give us your best shot!

Recent Programs

Dr. Shannon Bennett's "Animal to Human Infectious Disease Transmission: Present and Future" by Mila Stroganoff

The November 12th lecture entitled "Emerging Infectious Diseases" presented by Dr. Shannon Bennett started with her own life story at the age of nineteen. She had landed a volunteer opportunity in Liberia, West Africa near the Guinea border. Within a few weeks, she had come down with malaria (*Plasmodium falciparum*), transmitted by mosquito, and developed Amoebic dysentery (*Entamoeba histolytica*), a virus ingested by drinking or eating food contaminated by fecal matter, and then having fallen off the motorcycle on her way to a health clinic, she had acquired a Staphylococcus bacterial infection (*Staphylococcus aureus*), which could develop into septicemia. Her immune system was weakened and gave way to a bacterial infection. She had been vaccinated in Canada and had medications with her and yet here she was, a truly ill young lady. The questions that arose in her mind were how and why she had contacted these two viruses plus a bacterial infection? When she got well, Shannon decided to study pathogens and parasitism – Zoonotic diseases to get some answers. A zoonotic disease is an infectious disease that is transmitted from animals to humans.



Parasites have their own hosts, and here are some of the examples she gave us: HIV comes from non-human primates; Influenza is a bird virus which jumps into pigs and people; Zika virus has mosquitoes as its original host; Monkey Pox, or more correctly Mpox, is probably a rodent virus; MERS, which is a Middle Eastern Respiratory virus, comes from camels; Hantavirus is carried by small mammals; COVID-19, COV-2, SARS-COV-2 are bat viruses.

No one really knows the exact animal(s) which were carrying the COVID-19 virus at the Huanan seafood market in Wuhan province in China and that is because the whole market was burned to the ground. But the virus was concentrated in this area and then spread from Wuhan further out to gradually encompass the world. Once a virus acquires the ability of human-to-human transmission, in other words becomes efficient at community transmission, it has achieved the ability to become a pandemic. Not all viruses do. Most don't and the question is why some do and some do not.

Dr. Bennett says that these three years of the COVID pandemic have launched an exciting time for scientists. There is greater transparency of information and data between scientists and countries. One can analyze data in real-time and know what is going on in different parts of the world in record time. One can pre-publish or post data online, but it still needs to go through peer review before being officially published. She is very excited about systematic sewage surveillance. I think you had to be there to really feel her excitement about this point and understand how important sewage data really is. In less than 18 months a vaccine was developed; something never done before in the pharmaceutical world. It usually takes years to develop a vaccine. This rapid development was made possible because China's CDC posted the sequences of the early strain of SARS COV-2 right away. There is a new generation of DNA/RNA sequencing technology which offers real-time analysis in fully scalable formats from pocket to population scale and sequencing can be done on any length of fragment.

Dr. Bennett's original questions and thoughts have switched after all these years of researching pathogens. Her original questions about why here and now with regards to her illnesses contracted in Africa have now evolved to: *With a Virosphere that is chock full of some trillion viruses, why are we not getting sick all the time?*

~~~ JOIN US on EARTH DAY in SPVP ~~~

San Pedro Valley Park's Earth Day, **Friday, April 21st**, will be a rescue day for the plants in our Native Garden as we go after the usual suspects, weeds and plant debris. It will take place **from 10 am until 1 pm** by the Visitor Center. We may also be planting some natives. Bring your gloves. Donuts served!

The two garden areas are ambassadors for the wild biodiversity of our Park, so we need to have the plants be able to show themselves at their best for visitors. We hope you can make it and that we, the Friends of SPVP can get to know more of the folks who, like us, want to highlight a garden that welcomes native pollinators: bees, butterflies, beetles: a microcosm of a healthy Earth.

## First Trail Day Outing in 2023

by Joseph Piro

After getting rained out in January, we made our February 11, 2023 Trail Day! It was a brisk morning filled with a mix of sunshine and clouds, but **Mary Larsen, Istvan Puski**, my brother **Erik** and I gathered some tools and headed out.

We headed up the Old Trout Farm Trail, continued up the Brooks Falls Trail to the bench to admire the falls -- we



saw the wispy white ribbons of the larger lower tiers -- then headed back down, checked on the drain dips under the big oak trees at the start of the Hazelnut Trail and then walked the Plaskon Nature Trail and over to the Walnut Grove picnic areas. We cleared out a few drain dips along the way and there were a few muddy spots here and there, but the trails are in quite good shape overall.

Here's to another good year on the SPVP trails!

### ON THE TRAIL

Long-time member and champion trail walker ("twice a day, every day") whom everyone knows, Walter Colquhoun, was out on one of his walks along the Weiler Ranch Trail on a sunny, late January day. As he came to the junction with the Hazelnut Trail, something suddenly plummeted out of the sky about 10 yards ahead of him just off to the side of the trail and hit the ground. BAM!!



To his utter astonishment, it was a bird and the skillful predator had struck and killed a very unfortunate brush rabbit. But this was no ordinary winged predator, such as one of the many hawks that are common to SPVP.

As Walter grabbed his ever-at-the-ready camera to take photos of the interaction, he quickly realized it was...

*continued on page 7*

## March /April Calendar

### March Trail Day

Saturday, March 11 ..... 9 am

### O'Brien: Gardening 101: Webinar\*

Wednesday, March 15 ..... 7 pm

### March Habitat Restoration Day

Saturday, March 18 ..... 10 am

### Szewczak: World of Bats: Webinar\*

Saturday, March 25 ..... 4 pm

### April Trail Day

Saturday, April 8 ..... 9 am

### April Habitat Restoration Day

Saturday, April 15 ..... 10 am

### Earth Day Event

Friday, April 21 ..... 10 am

### Steele: Bird ID walk

Saturday, April 29..... 8 am

\*(Zoom registration required)

## >> FACTOID <<

### Weird Thing About Alpha Wolves

Are they stronger, smarter, better fighters, more aggressive, more confident; or are they possibly more likely to be risk-takers like OR-7 (right), the famous wolf from Oregon, who explored California extensively in search of a mate, eventually starting a new pack? And is there something mysterious going on affecting their decisions, something we are just now beginning to understand?



When the common parasite that causes toxoplasmosis forms cysts in the brain of a wolf, *Canis lupus* is 11 times more likely to disperse from its original pack and 46 times more likely to become a pack leader. Female wolves like OR-54, the great but tragical roamer of California, are just as susceptible to the Toxoplasmosis protozoan and its affects on the brain. *continued on page 5*



Quiz answers (from page 11):

1. **Red elderberry** leaf buds
2. **Stinging nettle** new foliage
3. New sprouting **Slinkpod**





## — Carolyn's Corner —

### REVELATIONS FROM THE WEIRDEST WORLD IN SPVP

Julia Trabucco must have been about 11 years old when, walking on the Montara Mt. Trail, she found a monster in the dirt, one that her father, Ray, had never seen before. They collected this weird “bug” in a glass jar, fascinated by its bulging eyes, rotund body, huge clawed, muscular front legs - 6 legs in all. Obviously they had found an insect, but a volunteer who had a class in Entomology under her belt was stumped; worse, a former speaker, an expert on killer bees, was given a description of the captive that left him at a loss. Who might help them?

Luckily Ray's neighbor happens to be Dr. Jim Mackey, who taught many different biology classes at SFSU, and



Cicada nymph

he was able to tell us the identity of the mystery insect: This was the nymph (an immature form) of a Cicada. But unfortunately the little ground dweller died before it could be returned to the earth; still, this became one of the first amazing insect discoveries uncovered within SPVP by Park Volunteers. When you hear the sounds of the crickets going up Weiler Ranch Road in the autumn at twilight time, you can also hear the rough, lower pitched sound of the cicadas as they also ‘rev’ themselves up in order to attract females. And if you work on habitat restoration days or trail days, you will see many other jointed-legged animals, not always welcome ones.

As the volunteers shared their experiences, they became more aware of the diverse “weirdness” in SPVP. Two old time volunteers, Jim Pommier and Pegge Fields, were digging drain dips on the Montara Mt. Trail when they unwittingly invaded a private dwelling of ground-dwelling hornets, who attacked them with precision. The discovery of this fierce and well-armed defender of its home, was followed in later years by a trail report of an outbreak of termites we now know occurs every fall. Then, we discovered a paper wasp nest located near the Trout Farm Trail, and Katie Antista told of her near-collision with a huge tarantula hawk wasp, amazing all who heard about the size of this predator. In her early years in SPVP, Carolyn Pankow had felt a surge of adrenaline when she saw the huge black and yellow millipede (insect relative) on the Montara Mt. Trail and softened at bit at the sight of a “lovely” lavender grasshopper on the Brooks Creek Trail during a weed pull.



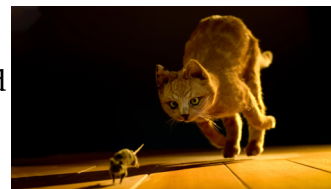
Paper wasp nest

Then came the clusters of flesh flies attracted to the pungent octopus stinkhorn fungus, and the massing of thousands of “lady bugs” by the Trout Farm. But our world of arthropods expanded when Ron Wilson specialized in his butterfly and moth photography and surged when Bing Huey trooped up all the trails in search of crab spiders ready to ambush pollinators, bumble bees sleeping on blossoms; flower-exploiting beetles, ants and others covered by pollen, creatures from an fine assortment of insect orders. Now let's see what weird insect and other arthropod critters you find during our new Bio-blitz! Challenge: find us some native bees and centipedes, Ok?

---

### FACTOID *continued from page 4*

And what about the effects of this microorganism on other creatures—on our human brains, or those of a mouse? Of course, we haven't studied every species of mammal as much as these common ones, but we do know that the disease afflicts many species; for instance, causing risk-taking mice to more likely be exposed and devoured by “Sylvester” and some humans to become Schizophrenic. By contrast, daring Alpha wolves seem to be quite lucky in their behavior and even more so once they have the support of their pack.



---

### We Need Volunteers!!

The Friends of SPVP are continually looking for new volunteers to join the small, but dedicated group of individuals that now contribute to our activities on behalf of the park. If you are interested in learning more about how you can help, whether it's being a host at the Visitor Center on weekends or helping to maintain the trails each month, or just pulling weeds and invasive plants now and then, **please contact President Judy Bacon or our Visitor Center Host Coordinator Carl Schwab**, or any of the members of our Board of Directors (listed on page 2). We'd be happy to speak with you about our volunteer opportunities.



## January Storm Played Havoc in the Park! by Sharron Walker

San Pedro Valley Park survived most of the wild January winds and rains. But not all fared well! When I arrived at the Visitor Center on the morning of January 8th to open up, I discovered the Brooks Trail was closed due to a Monterey Pine that came down during the night. The rangers had closed the trail, but not all visitors heeded the warning signs. Our efficient rangers were quick to address the downed tree!

The following weekend, the winds took out a willow that came down in the Youth Overnight Camp Ground at the beginning of the Trout Farm Trail. The south fork of San Pedro Creek was raging! During the rains, Brooks Falls made an impressive appearance and in the past two months it has been worth the hike to view it!

Our park fortunately did not experience the damage that other coastal parks, such as Fitzgerald and Quarry, did. Other than a couple of days of closure due to high winds, we remained open!



Brooks Creek Trail closure - 1/8/23



Downed tree below Brooks Cr. Tr. - 1/8/23



Storm damaged willow - 1/8/23



Fallen tree removal work - 1/8/23



Brooks Creek & South Fork San Pedro Creek - Storm Flow!  
(All photos by S.L. Walker)

---

## Successful Photography Workshops by Mila Stroganoff

In January 2023, we had a couple of wonderful photo workshops with Edwin Hacking. They were fun and informative. One dealt with DSLR cameras and because we ran out of time to practice what we had learned, we scheduled another session in the visitor center. During the second session, we reviewed the fundamentals and turned to the practical aspects of using the camera, applying the principles we had been taught. Easier said than done. The second workshop dealt with iPhone and Samsung cameras. This one also proved to be very popular.



Photo by Curtis Chan

There is much to be discovered about the features of both types of cameras, and it's astonishing what they can do if you know how. I'm pleased to say that Edwin Hacking proved to be both patient and very knowledgeable and gave us all a lot to think about when taking a photograph.



Photo by Judy Wong



## On the Nature Journaling Trail

by Sharron Walker

The San Pedro Valley Nature Journalers recently thanked Matt Del Carlo, our Head Ranger, by presenting him with a Certificate of Appreciation, a card signed by Nature Journaler members and some sweets! Although our meetings are usually at the Trout Farm Picnic Area, on those chilly, wet and windy days we were allowed to meet inside the Visitor Center. We so appreciate the support. Thanks Matt!!

Over the past two months, our prompt has been “Winter” and more recently “Emerging” new buds on both flowers and leaves, which have been sprouting all over the park and elsewhere. Here are a few nature journaling pages for you to enjoy and perhaps inspire to get on the trail yourself!



Jack Coot's NJ page - Trillium



Investigating trillium along the Plaskon Trail



Trillium along Plaskon Tr.

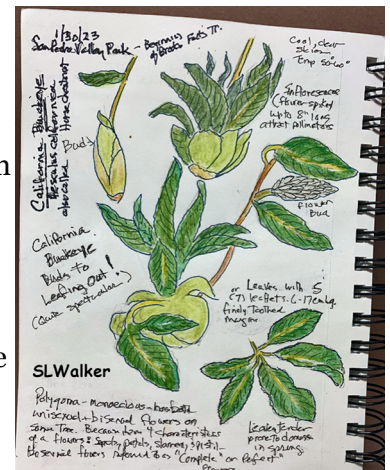


Matt Del Carlo receiving his certificate

(all photos by S.L. Walker except NJ'ers investigating trillium by B. Jones)

On the subject of “emerging,” I have been observing the California Buckeye tree, specifically the one located at the beginning of the Brooks Creek Trail near the restrooms. I am including my NJ page as I have been fascinated the buds of the new leaves.

A little about the California Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*): also commonly known as the California horse-chestnut, a species native to California and southwest Oregon. It is deciduous, its gray bark often coated with lichens and mosses, may be multi-trunked with a crown as broad as high, as is the case with the one I have been observing. Leaves have 5 leaflets (rarely seven) with finely toothed margins. The white fragrant inflorescences (flower spikes) are up to 8 inches long and are polygamo-monoecious – meaning they have unisexual and bisexual flowers on the same tree. Because they have all four characteristics of a flower: sepals, petals, stamen and pistil, bisexual flowers are referred to as “complete” or “perfect” flowers. And a great source for nectar seekers! Native Americans used the poisonous nuts to stupefy schools of fish.



Sharron's CA Buckeye NJ page

The San Pedro Valley Nature Journalers meet monthly, if you are interested in joining us, let us know!

### ON THE TRAIL *continued from page 4*



a Peregrine falcon!

Walter was somehow able to snap these amazing, once-in-a-lifetime photos as the peregrine dragged his prey over to the brush before quickly flying off with its meal.

It is sure is great to be in the right place at the right time when you're walking in SPVP!

Thanks Walter!!





## Half Moon Bay Boys & Girls Club Discover SPVP!

by Sharron Walker (all photos by S.L. Walker)

Adriana Fernandez Arriaga, Program Coordinator with the San Mateo County Parks Foundation, brought a group of 20 middle school students from the Half Moon Bay Boys & Girls Club to the park on February 10th.



Judy and Sharron assisted Adriana by giving the group a tour of the Visitor Center. Sharron presented an overview of the park and our four habitats: Oak Woodland, Grassland, Chaparral & Riparian. Judy educated them about our wildlife, primarily our mammals. Then Adriana involved the kids in a Visitor Center Scavenger Hunt. Working in partners, they enthusiastically discovered what our park has to offer by completing the "hunt"!



A hike followed on the Plasken Nature Trail, taking time to learn about some of our trees – specifically the Douglas Fir, Redwood and Coastal Live Oak! An activity that Adriana gave the kids was to match something in nature to a colored piece of paper each one had. This was great, keeping the kids focused and investigative.



Neither the students nor their teachers, Sandra Sarabia and Ninaa Marzocca, had been to our Park before. They were all enthusiastic about their experience. Unfortunately, we ran out of time, so they did not

get a chance to walk out on Weiler Ranch Trail to see deer. As a motivator to return, Adriana presented each with a pass from the SMCP Foundation to visit San Pedro Valley Park with their families to discover more. Overall, it was a successful day in spite of the weather being a bit chilly! The kids endured with positive attitudes and curiosity! It was a great introduction to nature for all of them and Adriana was well organized, so it was a successful field trip for all!



### Images from the Park

Penney Mitchell captured this fine image of one of our old friends, a Great Blue Heron, who has been seen by many in the park after the early January storms

Taken on 1/20/23  
around 9:30 am near  
the visitor center



Sharron Walker captured these excellent images  
of fungi in the park on 1/15/23



Chip Cherries  
(*Leratiomyces ceras*)  
with Fruticose lichen

Deceivers  
(*Laccaria laccata*)

Along south parking lot  
beneath Coast Silk Tassel  
plants





## Fruits of the January 28th BioBlitz in San Pedro Valley Park

Continued from page 2 - all photos by Linda Theroff



*Amanita* species



*Trametes versicolor* - turkey tail



*Peziza* species - cup fungus, Ascomycete  
(the others are Basidiomycetes)



*Stereum hirsutum*? - false turkey tail, probably the most common type of fruiting body found that day



*Omphalotus olivascens* - jack-o'-lantern mushroom, weakly bioluminescent



*Phellinus gilvus*? - no common name, a type of shelf fungus



*Cortinarius* species



More of the Beauty of Fungi in SPVP by Laurie Nikitas  
(taken in mid-January after the storms)



On Hazelnut Trail embankment



Fairy fingers



More fairy fingers



Part of a large colony of gigantic *Amanitas*





## A Photo Quiz by Bing Huey

**Can you identify these SPVP plants by their new emerging growth?**  
(the answers are on page 4)



#1



#2

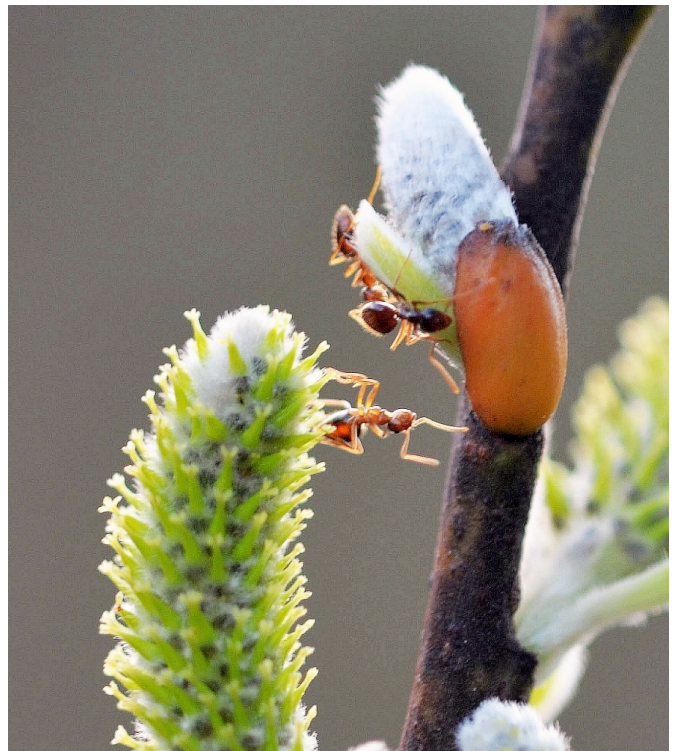


#3

## Beautiful Images of Small Creatures in the Park by Bing Huey



Anna's hummingbird with extended tongue  
taken on 12/24/22 along Brooks Creek Trail



Ants on new willow catkins  
taken on 2/6/23 along the Weiler Ranch Trail