

Valley Views

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park

May/June 2023

Upcoming Talks

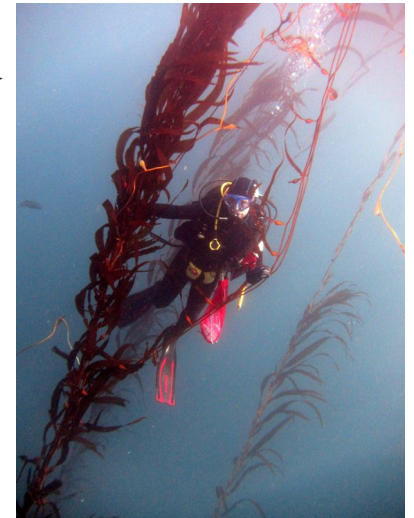
A May Zoom Webinar with Shelby Kawana “Kelp Forest Ecology, Management and Restoration in California”

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park welcome Shelby Kawana, an Environmental Scientist with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), who will present a lecture via Zoom on **Saturday, May 13th, 2023 at 4 pm** entitled “Kelp Forest Ecology, Management and Restoration in California.” California’s iconic canopy-forming kelp forests are a critical resource and ecosystem engineer. Kelp forests provide structural habitat, shelter, and food for hundreds of marine organisms including important local fisheries. Kelp forests face several environmental stressors, which can operate independently or synergistically to cause localized kelp declines and, in some cases, widespread deforestation. In this presentation, Shelby will discuss marine algae resource management in California and the collaborative efforts exploring various restoration approaches aimed to facilitate kelp recovery along the coast. Do join us.

Please click on the following link to register:

https://uso2web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_s69ADz30TJWLjjeCLzTO3w

About the speaker: Shelby Kawana is an Environmental Scientist with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (CDFW) Marine Region working primarily on kelp restoration and management. Shelby grew up abalone diving in the bull kelp forests on the Sonoma and Mendocino County coasts which led her to pursue an education in marine science. She obtained her BS in Marine Biology at UC Santa Cruz, where she was trained as a scientific research diver. Shelby began working for CDFW in 2012 for the Invertebrate Management Program, where she conducted extensive subtidal monitoring and research to support the management of the northern California recreational red abalone fishery. In addition, she worked for the UC Davis Endangered White Abalone Captive Breeding and Restoration Program, conducting active abalone restoration efforts in southern California. Shelby began working in her current position with the CDFW State Managed Finfish and Nearshore Ecosystem Program’s Kelp and Marine Algae Team in 2022.



Shelby Kawana in Monterey kelp forest

A June Children’s Program by Wildmind Science Learning “Wild Rainforest”

Join us on **Wednesday, June 21st at 1:30 pm** for an exciting, age-appropriate children’s program when Wildmind Science Learning of Half Moon Bay brings their “Wild Rainforest” show to **the Visitor Center**. This presentation will transport your curious young student to some of the most wondrous rainforests of the world. Students will see unusual and awe-inspiring animals and come to better understand the tropical rainforest and its plants, wildlife and people.

Founded in 1980 by environmental educator Steve Karlin, Wildmind (formerly Wildlife Associates) was the product of two things - his long study of the evolution of human learning, and a strong belief that humans need to better perceive their relationship with the living world. Believing that an interactive, whole-brain educational model would engage their creativity and empathy, Steve used children’s natural connection with animals to pioneer a unique methodology in which the animals themselves were the teachers. Having educated over 8 million students since 1980, Wildmind has grown into one of the foremost organizations of its kind.



The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park

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

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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 Walk

May Bird Walk in San Pedro Valley Park

Our esteemed Friend and bird song identification man, **Jim Steele**, will be leading the second of two early morning walks in the park **on Saturday, May 20th**. Once again, 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 hear singing their songs on our morning stroll. See you there!

Recent Program

Catherine Kilduff's "Critically Endangered Leatherback Sea Turtles" by Bing Huey

As large as a VW Beetle and weighing up to 1,300 pounds, the leatherback sea turtle is the world's largest. It also makes the longest migration of any reptile, a phenomenal 7,000 mile migration across the Pacific Ocean. Unique among reptiles, it can maintain a body temperature higher than that of the environment. The western Pacific subpopulation (there are other subpopulations in the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans) of the leatherback sea turtle nests in Indonesia and travels each summer to the west coast of North America where the nutrient rich waters produce the jellyfish that are its primary food. The species is some 75 million years old. Its life cycle, unfortunately, puts it square in the path of human progress and has now made it the most endangered, with numbers dropping precipitously in recent years. It was placed on the Endangered Species List in 2022.

Catherine Kilduff, of the Center for Biological Diversity, presented a webinar from the East Coast for the Friends on 21 January 2023 on the status of the leatherback sea turtle. Previously, she has been on the legislative staff of the U.S. House Representatives, Resources Committee. She has earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in biology and ecology and evolution, and a law degree from the University of Virginia.

Of the western Pacific subpopulation, there are approximately 560 nesting females in Indonesia and around 58 that come to the U.S. each year. Where they nest, the perils they face include physical disturbances and severe taking of eggs by humans and dogs. Survival of hatchlings is also very low. On their journey across the Pacific is where they meet the most challenges. Their route takes them through the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Plastics are either mistakenly ingested or become entangled on their front flippers. The major source of the plastic is garbage, of course, but the one most damaging component is fishing gear. Lines connected to buoys and discarded gear directly entangle and drown turtles. They are also being killed as incidental bycatch in fishing operations.

There are some measures adopted to try to save the leatherbacks. Catherine spoke about these. To directly address the hazard of buoy lines associated with crab traps, a lawsuit resulted in the requirement that Fish and Wildlife Service not issue permits until all leatherbacks have left an area. Warming waters extend the season in which leatherbacks spend off the coast, leading to an overlap with crab season. Contained within the 2022 Omnibus Spending Bill is a five-year transition program to phase out large scale driftnet fishing. Following the addition of the Pacific leatherback to the California Endangered Species List, any development of a fisheries management program will require the state undertaking extensive

continued on page 3

Recent Program

J.R. Blair's "Antarctica Travelogue"

by Bing Huey

He is no stranger to the Friends of San Pedro Valley Park. J.R. Blair has generously given his time to educate groups about the natural history of our area through speaking and leading walks. When he had the opportunity to be part of an expedition to Antarctica and the lands in the far South, he was eager to give a presentation to the Friends to share what he observed and experienced.

J.R.'s area of expertise is the fungi. He was a lecturer at San Francisco State University for 26 years and served as Director of SF State's Sierra Field Campus for 13 years until his recent retirement. His interests extend to other natural fields, such as plants and birds, and he is a member of the American Birding Association. As it turned out, most of his fellow travelers on this expedition were also birders.

For J.R., the November 2022 trip started with several flights from San Francisco to Buenos Aires, Argentina, then 3,000 km south to Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego (also part of Argentina), arriving at the beginning of the local summer. Ushuaia is the port city for expeditions to Antarctica, but is also a popular winter tourist destination. The city has a long history, having served as a naval station for Argentina and was visited by Charles Darwin, James Cook, and Ernest Shackleton. A former prison now houses a museum with information and artifacts from the city's past, including that of the indigenous Yamanes.

The trip, run by Quark Expeditions, set sail on the 8,252-ton, 124-meter "Ocean Diamond," the comfortable home for 17 days to the 185 guests and 120 crew, staff, and expedition leaders. They sailed with 20 Zodiacs on board to be used for on-shore excursions, each one with a capacity of 13 passengers.

The expedition left Ushuaia for the Falklands (Las Malvinas), encountering an abundance of southern petrels. Upon arriving, a 2 kilometer walk took the expedition to view an albatross colony. Also seen were rockhopper penguins (one of eight penguin species they would see on the voyage), kelp geese, upland geese, and Magellanic oystercatchers. Unfortunately, during this stopover, an outbreak of covid on board necessitated isolation of passengers to their staterooms, so that some of the bird observations were porthole sightings. The next destination was South Georgia Island, passing Shag Rocks enroute. These are pinnacles named for cormorants using the local term. Here, the history of whaling in the area can be seen in the whaling stations. Here also were colonies of king penguins, one numbering as many as 170,000. Biosecurity was taken very seriously to avoid the introduction of diseases or invasives. Boots needed to be rinsed clean of guano using a viricide. Historically introduced rats had been previously eradicated using poison.

The next destinations were the South Shetland Islands and the Antarctic peninsula, where they made four landings. J.R. showed video of the ship navigating the ice-filled waters, a tribute to their captain's skill. They saw colonies of Adelie and Gentoo penguins and their red, krill-laden guano. The travelers were not to approach penguins too closely, at times a challenge due to their abundance. The penguins travel along established "highways," which in places intersected with tourist trails. The return trip to Tierra del Fuego took the ship through the storied Drake's Passage, where they experience waves of six to seven meter height. The ship employed stabilizers to reduce the listing.

J.R. shot beautiful videos and still photos of ice they encountered, from the fragment-sized "brash" ice to sculpted floating icebergs, to A76A, the largest on the planet. Calved on 26 May 2021, this iceberg measures 174 kilometers from end to end and is about 250 feet from the water line to the top. To sail past it takes some six hours. J.R. devoted a portion of the presentation to natural history. Here he detailed a long list of birds and other wildlife that he saw. He spoke of the plant life, highlighting the ones native to Antarctica, and of the abundance of fungi and lichens. He accompanied the discussion with beautiful photographs and videos, which he also used to chronicle the experience of the voyage itself.

The recording of this wonderful travelogue will be available through the Friends website.

Leatherback Sea Turtles *continued from page 3*

environmental evaluation. Broader efforts include work on a United Nations resolution to reduce plastic use and pollution. Citing social injustice concerns, a permitted petrochemical complex in St. James Parish in Louisiana now needs a full environmental impact statement to be prepared by the Army Corps of Engineers.

A video produced by NOAA about the leatherback was recommended by Catherine, and is found at the following website: <https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education/teachers/bon-voyage-leatherback-turtles.html>

Her webinar has been recorded and is available through the Friends' website.

March Trail Day Outing

by Joseph Piro

Despite grey and drizzly-at-times weather, we had a good March 11, 2023 Trail Day! **Mary Larsen, Stan Jensen**, my brother **Erik** and I headed up the Old Trout Farm / Brooks Falls Trail loop to check on conditions. Rangers

Greg Escoto and **Matthew**

Tolmasoff even came along for a bit to check on a report of a possible downed tree near the small bridge and old foundation. We made it up to the bench overlooking the falls and along the way cut back



some overhanging brush, shoveled away some small piles of dirt that fell onto the trail and cleared a few drain dips.

Mary, Erik and I came back down the same way, but Stan continued on and did the whole loop, coming down the



Montara Mtn. Trail. Though definitely a bit messy and muddy in spots, given all the wild weather we've been having recently, the trails looked in pretty good shape.

In addition, here's a cool pic I took of one of the logs from a recently fallen tree behind

the Trout Farm restroom building -- look at those beautiful rings!

April Trail Day Work by Joseph Piro

For our April 8, 2023 Trail Day, **Mary Larsen, Stan Jensen, Istvan Puski**, my brother **Erik** and I did some good work on the east end of the Valley View Trail. With a good selection of tools along, we cut back quite a few bushes and branches, raked a lot of long strips of eucalyptus bark off the trail, drained a big puddle



of water at one end of a culvert pipe and repaired a drain dip and lengthy inside ditch on one switchback.

Along the way, we also spotted another little fairy door in the eucalyptus forest.

Head out on the trails to enjoy all the Spring beauty!

May / June Calendar

May Trail Day

Saturday, May 13 9 am

Kawana: Kelp Forest Webinar*

Saturday, May 13 4 pm

Steele: Bird walk in SPVP

Saturday, May 20 8 am

May Habitat Restoration Day

Saturday, May 20 10 am

June Trail Day

Saturday, June 10 9 am

June Habitat Restoration Day

Saturday, June 17 10 am

Wildmind: Wild Rainforest

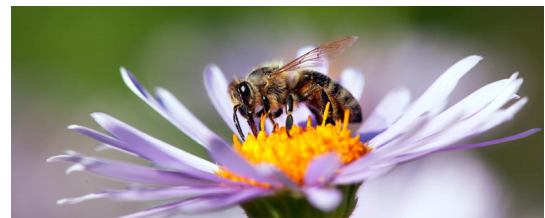
Wednesday, June 21 1:30 pm

*(Zoom registration required)

>> FACTOID <<

Not so Unfeeling After All

In both humans and invertebrates, dopamine is known to be involved in learning and reward. In a study published on April 28, 2022, in [Science](#), researchers found that: "Honey bees' dopamine levels were elevated during the search for food and dropped once the food was consumed. Dopamine may also help trigger a pleasant 'memory' of the sugary treat, as the tested bees' dopamine levels rose again when foragers danced to tell other foragers about the food's locations."



Western honey bee (*Apis mellifera*)

All this research was a cooperative, international project: neuroethologist*, Martin Giurfa, and his team used research information from managed beehives at the University of Fujian in China to study the neurotransmitter in bees, and several years ago they characterized many of the neural pathways that involved dopamine.

(*neuroethology is a study that involves explaining the role of precise mechanisms in the nervous system that determine animal behavior.)

Source: Natalia Mesa, *The Scientist* magazine, April 28, 2022



— Carolyn's Corner —

ANN PUSKI, CHARTER MEMBER OF THE FRIENDS: AN ODYSSEY

Born in a tumultuous period in Europe in the little country of Estonia, when Russians and Germans were using her home as a battle ground, Ann was strangely lucky that the Nazis took her father as a prisoner, making him inaccessible to the Russians. She was more transparently lucky because her mother was in charge of the welfare of the elderly, giving her family a solid home, sustenance and even mushroom-picking field trips in the countryside.

Bombed by the Germans and then the Russians, Mom, sister, and brother often had to take refuge underground from the explosions and falling debris. But one day as the sirens rang out, Ann was nowhere in sight. Mom had to rush frantically over 8 city blocks away to retrieve her and her friend from a local playground and back to the safety of a bomb shelter.

At the end of the war, when Ann's father was released by the defeated, the family crossed the Baltic sea in order to elude the Russians, a voyage of over 250 miles to the safety of Sweden. As the WWII hostilities still raged, many ships were sunk. Before hearing all of Mrs. Puski's story, I had imagined them boarding a jetliner!

Upon arrival in Sweden, 8 year old Ann, who unlike her older brother had been sheltered by her Mom from the dangerous walk to school, was met with two challenges: starting several years behind and learning the curriculum in a language totally incomprehensible and unrelated to Estonian.

But the post war years in the whole of Europe were full of hardships and offered few opportunities, so when she was 13, her family immigrated to Canada, where Ann stayed until after she married, the young couple then moving to Pacifica.

The happy pair settled in the Pedro Point area and ran a successful crafts store next door to the Periwinkle Art Gallery: Ann was the weaver and her husband was the potter. However, this idyllic life of many years was interrupted by the passing of her treasured partner. Ann's decision was to make a new home in the sylvan beauty of Rockaway Beach. There, she was able to have a burgeoning, secluded garden that her younger son, Istvan, helped weed and cultivate with care.

Then, back in the mid-to-late 1980s, she and her close friend, Jean Curry, joined the nascent Volunteers of San Pedro Valley County Park as charter members. Her son followed suit much later. Since Istvan had always tended the garden at home, Ann wasn't too surprised when he grew to become a central figure in restoring the habitat of San Pedro Valley Park; volunteer work that he continues to this day.

LOOK for it in SPVP NOW: A HARMLESS SERPENT

Faster than a speeding bullet? Not quite, but the **Western Yellow-Bellied Racer**, beats out our gopher snake and probably our garter snakes, sliding swiftly ahead at 3 1/2 mph.



Juvenile Western yellow-bellied racer

Ok, so the side winder rattlesnake with its exotic "gait" has been clocked at 15 mph and the southern black racer at 10 mph, but these are two of the three fastest snakes in the world.

And this racer of San Mateo County, sighted in San Pedro Valley Park, slithers along with

its head held high in a side-to-side movement, as it looks out for prey or possibly danger.



Adult Western yellow-bellied racer (photos by Gary Nafis)

Our fast and slender reptile, *Coluber constrictor mormon*, is very capable of climbing a tree, though it's usually seen on the ground. Try looking for it in the warmer part of the day in later spring (That's now!) at the hilly shoulder of the Weiler Ranch Road Trail. Note: the photo above right was taken by a San Mateo County resident, but if you see a baby, it will have a mottled appearance of a juvenile, as in the above left photo

Winter Storm Damage and Repair on the Brooks Creek Trail

by Mark Golembiewski and Stan Jensen

All in all, San Pedro Valley Park survived the relentless wind and rain storms we endured this past winter fairly well. But in mid-March, the heavy rains during one of those storms washed out a portion of the Brooks Creek Trail, causing the trail to be impassible and closed to hikers since that time. An approximately 35 ft section of the trail slid down the hillside in one area near the foot bridge. And just a bit further up the trail, a large section of the dirt embankment slid down onto the trail in another spot just below the waterfall-viewing bench. The photos below show the extent of the damage that resulted at those two locations along the trail.



On Sunday, April 23, the rangers enlisted the help of trail runners from the Pamakid Runners in San Francisco to help them carry materials to the site, build a retaining wall and widen the damaged section of trail below the foot bridge. With three rangers and a dozen volunteers, the work was completed early, so the group walked back down, widening the trail in several places where it had narrowed. This was another great example of the partnership between the park rangers and

volunteers that can produce significant results for all the park users. Thank you to all who volunteered to make these badly needed repairs. The Brooks Creek Trail is now open again!

The photos below (courtesy of Stan Jensen, Friends Trail Day volunteer) show the repair work in progress.



More repair photos: *continued on page 8*

Photo Contest Update - Winners to be Announced Soon!

The Friends' 2023 Photo Contest, which has been open to all park visitors since February 1st, was closed to new entries on May 1st. We are now in the process of collecting and reviewing the many fine images we have received. Judging is expected to take place shortly and be completed by May 15th. Look to the Friends' website for the announcement of the winners in each category. Thank you to all who entered the contest!!

As was done last year, the winning images will be printed and displayed in the Visitor Center, and all visitors for a period of about 30 days will be able to view them and vote on their favorite. The photo that garners the most votes will receive the 'People's Choice Award.' Stay tuned!

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 more than happy to speak with you about our volunteer opportunities.

On the Nature Journaling Trail

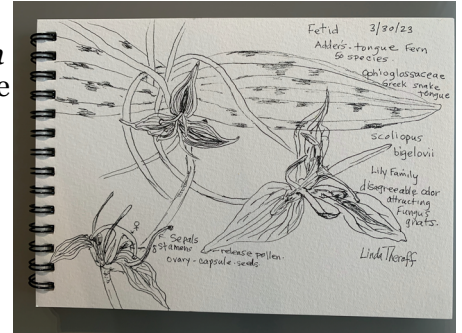
by Sharron Walker

The San Pedro Valley Nature Journalers continued their quest for emerging buds and leaves for the months of February to April. If you have been out on the trails you will have noticed lots going on! The trillium continued to bloom on Plaskon, Hazelnut and Weiler Ranch Trails and was the focus of several journal pages.

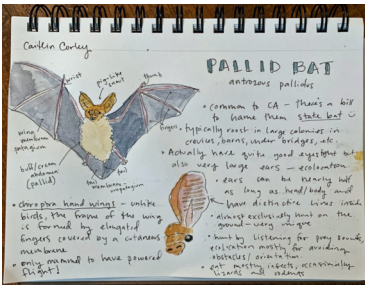


Melanie's NJ Page (left) illustrates both the *Western* and *Giant Trillium* and is pointing out the difference to Jane A'Hearn.

Linda captured the *Fetid Adder's Tongue* with it's final bloom (right).



During a discovery hike on the Plaskon Nature Trail at our March 30th meeting, Istvan, Carl, Caitlin and Wendy discovered a wonderful oak branch with two types of lichen. Most of us would walk right by this piece of branch, but once inspected, they discovered it was covered with both *Fruiticose* and *Foliose* lichen, as well as moss. Wendy took on the challenge of creating a NJ Page (right)!



Caitlin Corley focused her NJ Pg on Bats, specifically the Pallid Bat (left). Her inspiration was Dr. Szwczak's March 25th Friends' Zoom webinar program on the *Fascinating World of Bats!* BTW... the Pallid Bat may become California's first State Bat!

There's no end to what Nature Journalers find along the San Pedro Valley Park trails! It's all about being curious, observing, discovering, and documenting one's findings. And although we all strive to make impressive



sketches, the focus is not on producing fine art, but rather capturing a record – both pictorial and written – of what we have found.

The San Pedro Valley Nature Journalers meet monthly, on Thursdays. If interested, send an email to: sharronlee@aol.com.

ON THE TRAIL - A Correction and Learning Moment

After publication of our last newsletter, several readers promptly pointed out an error in the story about Walter Colquhoun's surprising encounter with a raptor during one of his walks along the Weiler Ranch Trail. Craig Nikitas of Bay Raptor Rescue and someone who has worked with raptors for almost 50 years, told your editor that identification of birds of prey can be very tricky and photos are frequently misidentified in various media. He told me that the raptor in Walter's photos that predated the rabbit was an adult female Cooper's Hawk, not a Peregrine Falcon. Cooper's hawks (as well as other species of hawks) are commonly seen in San Pedro Valley Park, while peregrine falcons are not a park resident. Peregrines are known to have nested in the cliffs along Devil's Slide Trail since the mid-1980s.



Walter's photo along the Weiler RR Trail

Craig also told me that, in addition to the visual differences between the two raptors, peregrines have a diet that comprises mostly other birds, and while Cooper's hawks also eat a high percentage of avian prey, they also take a lot of small mammals. That would be very unusual for a peregrine.

The upshot of this story is that it can be easy to misidentify a raptor when you see one, but getting a chance to capture an amazing bird-prey event like Walter did is still pretty special. Thanks again for sharing Walter!!



Peregrine falcon
Photo by CA Academy of Sciences

~~~ A Celebration of EARTH DAY in SPVP ~~~

This year, Earth Day was celebrated in San Pedro Valley Park on Friday, April 21st. The Friends organized a group of about a dozen volunteers who removed weeds and invasive plants from our Native Plant Garden and the newly landscaped areas in front of the Visitor Center. We also weeded and planted a number of new native plants (supplied by Head Ranger, Matt Del Carlo) in the landscaped areas located along the edges of the parking lots. Thanks to all for showing up and pitching in, including Melanie Heisler and Erik Piro, and several Board members: Judy Bacon, Istvan Puski, Carl Schwab and your editor.



We are especially grateful for the support of several members of the SMCo Parks Department, Natural Resources Division, led by SMCo Volunteer Coordinator, Stuart Smith, who joined us in our weeding and cleanup efforts. Thank you!! Much was accomplished thanks to everyone's diligent and hard work!



(Photos by Carl Schwab & Mark Golembiewski)

More Brooks Creek Trail Repair Photos *continued from page 6*



(Photos courtesy of Stan Jenkins)



Bung Huey's Magical Images of Spring in San Pedro Valley Park



Alder catkins blown down by wind near Walnut picnic area - 03/13/23



Bushtit - along the Hazelnut Trail - 03/06/23



California gilia - along the Valley View Trail - 04/16/23



Deer tick - along the Valley View Trail - 03/13/23

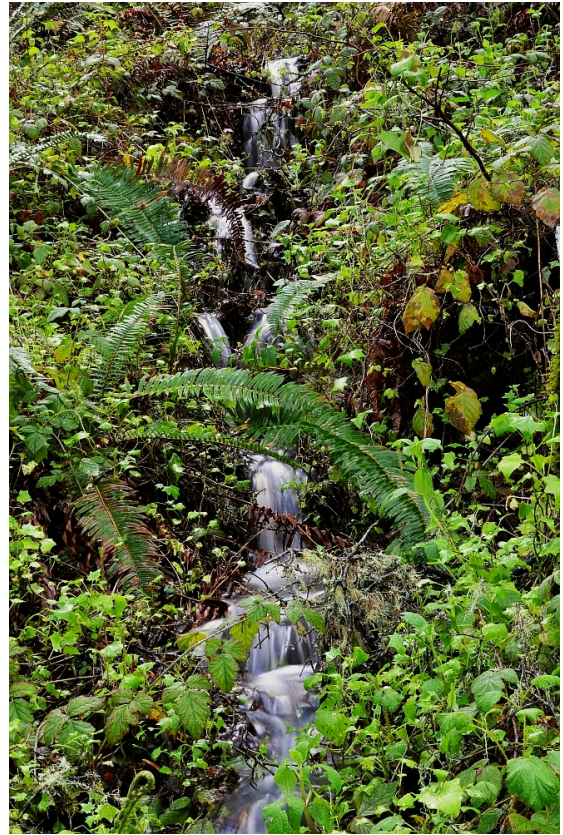


Crab spider on thimbleberry leaf - along the Hazelnut Trail - 04/09/23

More of Bing's Magical Images in SPV Park



Elfin saddle observed by Katie Antista near park entrance - 03/20/23



Temporary waterfall - along the Hazelnut Trail - 03/13/23



Syphid fly on trillium - along the Plaskon Nature Trail - 03/13/23



Fungus gnats on slinkpod petal - along the Hazelnut Trail - 03/06/23



Twenty-spotted lady beetle on blackberry blossom - along the Hazelnut Trail - 04/09/23