

# Valley Views

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park

July/August 2023

## Upcoming Programs

### A July Children's Program by Conservation Ambassadors' Wild Things

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park again welcome Gabe Kerschner and his Wild Things show to San Pedro Valley Park on **Thursday, July 20th at 2 pm** at the **South Walnut Grove picnic area**. Last year's program, was fabulous and even included "Clover" a baby Red kangaroo (joey). The wonderfully affable Gabe loves puns and jokes, and always brings lots of smiles and laughs to his programs. He certainly did that last year when he brought his fine group of animal ambassadors, which included a screech owl, a rattlesnake, a kingsnake, a hawk, a turkey vulture, and a gray fox, to SPVP last summer for the first time. Everyone loved the show! Do join us.



**About the organization:** Gabe Kerschner founded Wild Things in 1988 after graduating from the Exotic Animal Training and Management Program at Moorpark College, with the goal of not only providing a home for animals in need, but also sharing with others a respect for wildlife and an understanding of wildlife conservation.



Conservation Ambassadors' Wild Things was founded for the purpose of housing and caring for displaced wildlife. With the help of these animal ambassadors, they have been educating the public with a message of conservation and appreciation for natural wonders for over 35 years. They provide a home for over 60 species of wildlife. These animals are shared in their wildlife education presentations, which are offered to thousands of school children every year. Their hope is that through meeting these animals and hearing their stories, future generations will gain a greater appreciation for the natural world.

### An August Children's Program by The Beetlelady, Stephanie Dole

Join us on **Saturday, August 12th at 11:00 am** in the **Visitor Center** for an exciting, age-appropriate children's program when The Beetlelady, Stephanie Dole, again brings her "Bugs" show for kids to **San Pedro Valley Park** for some summer fun. She is a highly-educated and talented presenter who always enthralls the young scientists in her audiences with her wide array of "creepy crawlers" and their interesting stories.



Stephanie believes that bugs are beautiful, captivating, engaging and accessible. The Beetlelady educates people of all ages about science and nature through hands-on learning with bugs.

**About the presenter:** Dr. Stephanie A. Dole has been educating the public since 1997. She has a PhD in Entomology from Michigan State University. She has presented programs on insects to the public at the University of California Davis, California public schools, Filoli Gardens, CuriOdyssey museum, Bee Keepers Guild of San Mateo County, and the California Academy of Sciences, among many others.



The Friends of  
San Pedro Valley Park

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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.

**SAN PEDRO VALLEY PARK, PACIFICA**

A herd of deer likes to graze the wide meadow.  
Hawks, vultures, ravens soar high above.

Western Fence Lizards stretch in the sun  
Stare and skitter on rough, gray cement.  
Males do show-off push-ups  
To discourage their rivals.

Varied birds perch on many tree species.  
Migrants solo or in flocks come and go.  
Many calls and songs beguile  
Throughout the changing seasons.

Eucalyptus sheds its dried, curled bark  
Filling the woods with a wake-up scent.

Friendly walkers wave or smile  
Or, hail each other with a wink or tipped hat.  
Some pass alone filled with private thoughts.  
Many big families enjoy the pleasant path.  
Birthday Celebrations are constant and bright.

People who come to this Eden of a Park  
Feel lucky, grateful, happy as meadowlarks.

Ellen Frank, May, 2023

Ellen is a new member of the Friends of San Pedro Valley Park. She sent us this lovely poem with her check for membership dues. I'm sure you will all agree that it was a wonderful surprise (and one that Adrian certainly didn't expect) from a very talented new member. Thank you, Ellen... and welcome to the Friends! We look forward to seeing more of your poetic work and publishing it in our newsletter.

**Sightings in the Park** by Sharron Walker



Brush rabbit - dinner time on the  
Trout Farm Trail - 6/11/23



Yerba santa blooming along  
the Hazelnut Trail - 5/30/23



## Recent Program

### Loretta O'Brien's "Vegetable Gardening 101"

by Judy Bacon

On Wednesday, March 15th, Loretta O'Brien, Co-founder and Director of Pacifica Gardens, gave an excellent and very informative talk entitled, "Vegetable Gardening 101." She told us how to start a vegetable garden and how best to maintain it. Here are some great tips from Loretta that I came away with.

When thinking about planting a vegetable, start small. Many leafy vegetables can do well in the shade, but need at least four hours of full sun every day.

Composting in your backyard garden is the best thing you can do to improve your soil, grow healthy vegetables and save water.

If you don't know how to compost, take a class – San Mateo Master Composters offer classes.

The ideal plant box should have metal mesh on the bottom to keep out gophers but allow the roots to go through.

Planting seedlings is the best way to start your garden. To plant, put a trowel into the soil at a 45 degree angle to the soil level. Pull the trowel toward you to create a hole. Drop the seedling into the hole. The leaves should be at soil level.

Learn the spacing requirements for the vegetables you are planting, including how big they get, how big their root system is, and how much light and water they need.

Avoid watering with strong streams of water directly applied to the plants, which can cause harm to the plant, can cause erosion, and disturb the plant and roots.

Learn when your vegetables are ready for harvest.

Bigger is not always better. Zucchini for example, can get too big and result in a squishy mess when cooked if allowed to grow too big.

The easiest veggies to grow in our area are potatoes, zucchini, peas, pumpkins, onions and carrots. Artichokes and brussel sprouts also grow well, but take more than one season to produce.

That's it in a nutshell! Plant your veggies and happy harvesting!

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### The Beauty of Blooming Trillium in the Spring in SPVP

by Mark Golembiewski



## May Trail Day Report

by Joseph Piro

The early morning fog retreated to the beach and sunny blue skies were overhead for our May 13, 2023 Trail Day when **Mary Larsen, Istvan Puski**, my brother **Erik** and **I** headed out to do a little work. We took along some tools and hiked the Old Trout Farm/Brooks Falls loop. We made it up to the bench overlooking the falls, where along the way we trimmed



back some vegetation and admired the new retaining wall fix for the recent landslide just below the bridge.

We then came back down and tidied up the path meandering through the Sun Garden out front of the Visitor's Center. Lastly, we planted a few plants in one of the parking lot islands.

A good mornings' work indeed!

## June Trail Day Work

by Joseph Piro

Some exciting news on our June 10, 2023 Trail Day -- we had 3 newcomers! **Ray Branam, Paul Greer** and **Jeff Franco** joined **Mary Larsen, Stan Jensen, Istvan Puski**, my brother **Erik** and **I** for some good hiking and trimming work.



With so many people, we split into 2 groups. Mary, Paul, Erik and I did the entire Montara Mtn./Brooks Falls loop... while the others did the entire Hazelnut/Weiler Ranch loop. With loppers, McLeods and a rake, we trimmed things both low and high in spots all along the way, but overall things look in pretty good shape.

Enjoy the trails!

## July / August Calendar

### July Trail Day

Saturday, July 8 ..... 9 am

### July Habitat Restoration Day

Saturday, July 15 ..... 10 am

### Wild Things: Kids Program\*

Thursday, July 20 ..... 2 pm

### August Trail Day

Saturday, August 12 ..... 9 am

### Beetlelady: Kids Program

Saturday, August 12 ..... 11 am

### August Habitat Restoration Day

Saturday, August 19 ..... 10 am

\* Meet at Walnut Grove Picnic Area

Meet at Visitor Center for all other events

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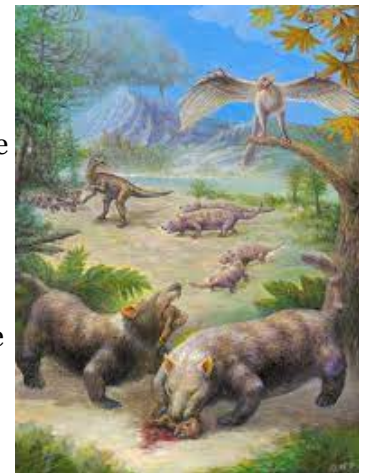
### Did mammals ever eat dinosaurs?

**Yes, some did.** A skeleton of one of the dinosaur-diners was found in China, in about 2005. It has been named **Repenomamus giganticus** and was a large coyote-size mammal, a carnivore who ate both dinosaurs and mammals and lived in the early Cretaceous period (right after the Jurassic), before the



asteroid killed most life on earth and all the dinosaur line except for the birds. Baby dinosaurs were found in the stomach of one *Repenomamus*, seen at left.

There was also a mammal found in China that was about the size of an opossum; one of these fossils contained a parrot dinosaur in its belly. (See artist's representation at right.) Both photos are from NBC Science News 2005.



Read more about these beasts in "the Rise and Reign of the Mammals" by **Steve Brussatte**.





## THE RISE AND REIGN OF THE MAMMALS by Steve Brusatte

Why do we mammals include the largest animal to ever live on the Earth, the Blue Whale? Why did we survive the great catastrophe that took out all the dinosaurs except the bird line? Was it just that we were tiny underground night dwellers that could hibernate when things got bad? Of course, we love to think our brain was quite remarkable and that we could take better care of our young. But so much of our survival is just because we were doing especially well in the late Cretaceous period, even before the time of "Jurassic Park," back over 200 million years ago. We were busy diversifying, forming more species than the reptiles or dinosaurs; we were extremely successful smaller creatures, as Steve Brusatte will convince you.

And when a catastrophe like the famed asteroid strikes, you want diversity so that some of you will have the possibility to have the wherewithal, the right combination to live up to a mind-blowing, not to mention Earth-blowing, devastation and will survive all the possible adversities that might strike. Most of the mammals species died out too, but it was more than just our low profile that allowed some of us to survive, to carry on. You can see it was so much because the odds were in our favor. But what allowed us to take on so many life styles, so many ways of survival that would favor at least a few species who could win at the game?

Strangely, so much of the great variety of our warm-blooded "ancestors" was because early on we started developing jaw bones that fused and formed a solid surface for development of fine, specialized muscles and with them a wide array of tools for pulverizing food: our teeth, our wonderfully differentiated teeth in the individual and in the entire mammalian class. Incisors for cutting, multifaceted ones for crushing, further ingenious "devices". And different teeth in each mammal meant that mammals could exploit expertly either fish, insects, plants, all manner of food, and because we pulverized food in our mouths, we used less energy in digestion, freeing us to "hunt", grow and reproduce.



© DK 2001

Artist rendering of a primitive mammal, *Trinaxodon*, from about 250 million years ago in the late Triassic period (left)

A *Trinaxodon* skull (right)



Steve Brusatte, author of the highly acclaimed, "The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs," now titillates and amazes

readers of "The Rise and Reign of the Mammals," telling us about fossil finds of mammals around the world that have steadily filled in the gaps of our history. But he tells us much more about the evolution of our hairy kin. I recall being astonished when Carol Martinez told me she had learned in our last bats program that these masters of flight and echolocation were closer on the evolutionary scale to cats, dogs, horses, and even whales than they were to the primates, our order of mammals. Naturally, there are many more important revelations, more threads of our connections to and success or extinction of some our relatives in this remarkable book.

## UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH DEER

The second night after we had backpacked to a camping area above a crashing Mist Falls on the eponymous river of King's Canyon National Park, the four of us took a late twilight stroll deep into the woods. In our stealth, we nearly crushed our boots onto a hidden fawn; we breathed uneasily with mixed feelings of personal delight but with relief that the wisely unscented and secluded baby didn't meet a violent end at our hands (feet?) Pretty personal, but a very fleeting moment.

Back in the present in SPVP, we will see fawns now that the grass of the Weiler field has been mowed, mainly does with their fawns in tow, as at 3 weeks the once scentless fawns will no longer be sequestered safely away from the more aromatic mom. They will be browsing along with their mothers.



continued on page 6

## ON THE TRAIL - A Collection of Wonderful Recent Sightings by Walter Colquhoun

Our champion and ubiquitous daily walker of the SPVP trails, Walter Colquhoun, has recently outdone himself — even when compared to his typically frequent but sometimes uncommon encounters with fauna in the park that he’s been able to capture with his ever-present camera for the rest of us to enjoy (as many of you have experienced when he delights in sharing his photo prints with us).

Since the beginning of June, Walter was able to photograph several very uncommon sightings of the park’s denizens that he encountered while on his usual twice-daily walks along the trails, often Weiler Ranch Road.

While walking on the WRR Trail near the junction with the Hazelnut Trail on June 1st, Walter was surprised by the sight of a brush rabbit doing his best stand-up prairie dog impersonation (*right*). He was able to snap this photo of the at-attention little guy, who was even able to provide a lovely backdrop of some blooming California poppies for Walter’s perfect image.



*continued on page 8*

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### UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH DEER *continued from page 5*

We feel privileged if these spotted youngsters come close to the WWR trail or even cross it. But are we up close and personal with them?



Some of us see bucks in the autumn challenging our passage along the pathway; that feels pretty close and personal. One evening, Jack Dodson, former Friends member, called us from a Visitor Center meeting to witness a thunderous exposition of two mature bucks crashing antler to antler\* in the parking lot. But our weekly explorer, Laurie Nikitas, had a more intimate experience: she came upon a mature buck with a full rack on the Hazelnut trail, as it lay asleep with eyes wide open, gazing into the space in front of it, taking several seconds before it tumbled to the approach of this interloper—a very intimate experience.

My greatest moment of connection with a deer happened 20 years ago when I was sitting alone on the bench at the junction of the Montara Mountain and Brooks Creek trails, and saw a deer who had paused on the latter pathway, not 20 feet from me. I “sashayed” back and forth with this antlerless critter, trying to let it go on up the Montara Mtn. Trail, but any movement or violation of its flight distance stymied both me and the deer. For 3 minutes I had the pleasure of a strange dance with this alert, sprinting jumper. Plenty of time for the deer, who wisely did not want to get up close and personal with any human.

\*FYI: You cannot tell the age of a deer by studying its antlers: you would have to look at its teeth!

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## We Need Volunteers!!

The Friends of SPVP are continually looking for new volunteers to join the small, but dedicated, group of individuals who now contribute to our organization’s activities on behalf of the park. If you are interested in learning more about how you can help us and give back to our wonderful park — 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

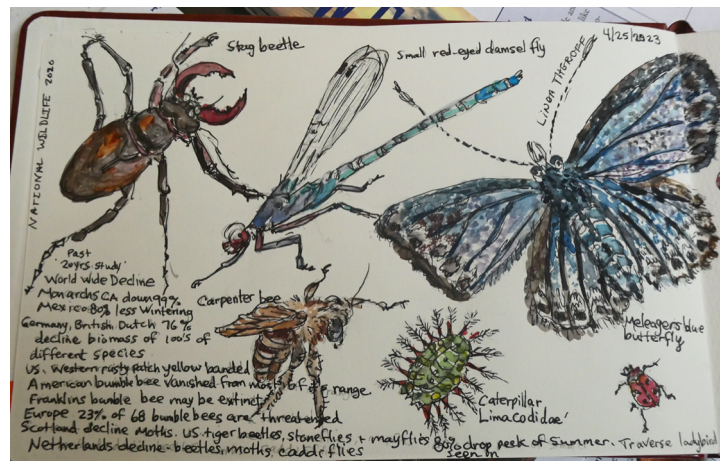
Walking or hiking the park, one cannot help to notice the amazing blooms that are happening on our trails. Although the San Pedro Valley Nature Journalers continued their journaling of blooms, and added "Anything Insects" as a prompt, we did something a little different at our April meeting. Annie Blair, one of our nature journalers, gave a presentation on drawing techniques.



Nature Journaling, as you may have read in my previous articles, is not about fine art, but we all strive to improve our journaling and a component is sketching and drawing. Annie's "Tips to help record visual images" were excellent! And her presentation was well received by the group. Some of her pointers are:

- \*Get the basic sketch right
- \*Carve in negative space
- \*Use a grid
- \*Look at what is behind the subject

For the past few months we have been meeting inside the Visitor Center. In late May, the weather warmed up, so we were able to meet at our usual Creekside Picnic Area. We looked about for insects – our latest prompt - and shared our journal pages. Linda Theroff had some very impressive journal insect pages! (one at right below)



Our next prompt is "Birds." If you are interested in sketching birds, check out John Muir Laws' website for the basics on "how to draw a bird." Go to: [Johnmuirlaws.com](http://Johnmuirlaws.com).

The San Pedro Valley Nature Journalers meet monthly. For info contact: [sharronlee@aol.com](mailto:sharronlee@aol.com).



**ON THE TRAIL - Walter's Collection of Wonderful Recent Sightings** *continued from page 6*

Then, just a few days later and again while walking on the Weiler Ranch Road Trail, Walter came upon a red-shouldered hawk along the edge of the trail up ahead that had apparently just captured a small snake and was struggling to deal with it. It almost looked like the snake was beginning to get the better of the hawk!



Next came a wild turkey mom and her three chicks who were just strolling along the Weiler Ranch Road Trail on June 15th, with no apparent concern for the human hikers sharing the trail with them.

Quite a couple of weeks in early June for Walter during what turned out to be some of his most unusual exploits along the trails! Thanks for sharing your wonderful photos with us Walter!!





## ~~~ 2023 Friends Photo Contest Winners ~~~

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park's 2023 Photo Contest Committee wishes to thank all who participated in this year's contest. The number of entries we received by the May 1st deadline was about twice the number we received for our inaugural contest last year. The quality of the images entered was even better than last year's submittals, as well. We're looking forward to continued growth for our contest next year.

Our gracious judges, Matt Del Carlo, Edward Hacking and Sharron Walker, reviewed all of the entries and completed their deliberations in early May to determine the top three entries in the four contest categories. Winners were notified on May 13th and received an award ribbon and certificate for each winning entry. Several of the winning photographers stopped by the Visitor Center to pick up their awards from Photo Contest Committee members Sharron Walker and Mark Golembiewski on Sunday, June 4th.

### And the winners are:

#### Flora

- 1st "Eucalyptus Trees at Sunset" by Patia Stephens
- 2nd "Fiddle Dee Dee" by Bevan Jones
- 3rd "Bark and Moss" by Jeff Vanderbilt

#### Fauna

- 1st "An Evening With Whoo?" by Shane Kadlecik
- 2nd "Limnitis at Rest" by Ron Wilson
- 3rd "Scorpion" by Chris Jones

#### Trails & Landscapes

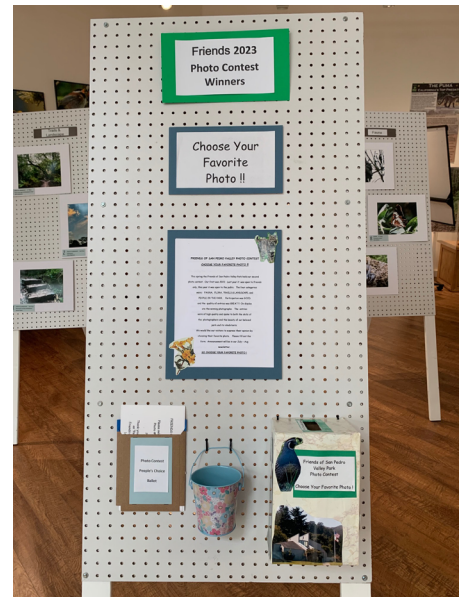
- 1st "Coast Live Oak & Atmospheric Trail" by Shane Kadlecik
- 2nd "Halloween" by Patia Stephens
- 3rd "Remnants of Past Civilizations" by Bevan Jones

#### People in the Park

- 1st "Weilers at Rest" by Shane Kadlecik
- 2nd "Three's Company" by Bevan Jones
- 3rd "Istvan and Owl" by Paula Martin

**(The winning photos are displayed beginning on page 10)**

As was done last year, the winning images were printed and displayed in the Visitor Center, and for a period of about 60 days, all visitors 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 to learn which one was the winning photo!



Visitor Center display of winning entries and ballots for People's Choice Award



Shane Kadlecik with his multiple awards



Multiple award winner Bevan Jones with one of his entries



~~~ 2023 Friends Photo Contest: Winning Entries ~~~



Category: **Flora** / Place: **1st** ~ “Eucalyptus Trees at Sunset” ~ by Patia Stephens



Category: **Flora** / Place: **2nd** ~ “Fiddle Dee Dee” ~ by Bevan Jones



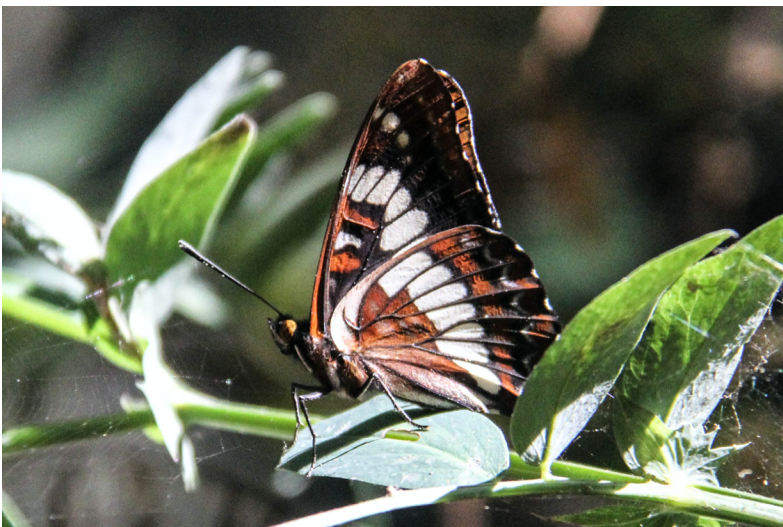
Category: **Flora** / Place: **3rd** ~ “Bark and Moss” ~ by Jeff Vanderbilt



~~~ 2023 Friends Photo Contest: Winning Entries (cont'd) ~~~



Category: **Fauna** / Place: **1st** ~ “An Evening with Who?” ~ by Shane Kadlecik



Category: **Fauna** / Place: **2nd**  
~ “Limenitis at Rest” ~  
by Ron Wilson

Category: **Fauna** / Place: **3rd**  
~ “Scorpion” ~  
by Chris Jones





~~~ 2023 Friends Photo Contest: Winning Entries (cont'd) ~~~



Category: **Trails & Landscapes** / Place: **1st**  
~ "Coast Live Oak & Atmospheric Trail" ~ by Shane Kadlecik



Category: **Trails & Landscapes** / Place: **2nd**  
~ "Halloween" ~ by Patia Stephens



Category: **Trails & Landscapes** / Place: **3rd**  
~ "Remnants of Past Civilizations" ~  
by Bevan Jones



~~~ 2023 Friends Photo Contest: Winning Entries (cont'd) ~~~



Category: **People in the Park** / Place: **1st** ~ “Weilers at Rest” ~  
by Shane Kadlecik



Category: **People in the Park** / Place: **2nd**  
~ “Three’s Company” ~ by Bevan Jones



Category: **People in the Park** / Place: **3rd**  
~ “Istvan and Owl” ~ by Paula Martin



## More of Walter's June Images of Critters in SPV Park



Mother and fawn (one of two) black-tailed deer in WRR meadow



Alligator lizard - along the Weiler Ranch Road Trail



Northern flicker on tree - along the Brooks Creek Trail



Wild turkey chicks in grass along side the WRR Trail



Resting Lorquin's admiral - along the Hazelnut Trail