

Valley Views

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park

November / December 2024

Upcoming Programs

A November Zoom Webinar with Dr. Emily Taylor “The Secret Lives of Snakes”

On **Saturday, November 9th at 7 pm**, the Friends welcome Dr. Emily Taylor from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. She is the author of California Snakes and How to Find Them. She will show us numerous California snakes and will also focus on the ones in our area. Emily is obsessed with snakes, but she loves them and works diligently to improve their public image. Dr. Taylor will address the question of how people and snakes can coexist safely and peacefully. Join us for a rare and fascinating look into the world of snakes.

About the Speaker: Dr. Emily Taylor is a professor of biological sciences at the California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, California, where she conducts research on the physiology, ecology, and conservation biology of lizards and snakes with her students. She has a bachelor's degree in English from UC Berkeley and Ph.D. in Biology from Arizona State University.

Please register in advance for this webinar using the following link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_uuzZ6OBVTTmeTxWtkOf6Kw

You will then get a confirmation email with further instructions, as well as reminder emails at one week, one day and one hour to prior the Webinar.

There will be no webinar presentation in December. Our webinar series will resume in January.



A December Mycoblitz in San Pedro Valley Park with J.R. Blair

On **Saturday, December 7th at 11 am**, 20 people can comb the park's trails for **three hours from 11 am to 2 pm** searching for and collecting mushrooms. Place your collected mushrooms in a large basket or doubled paper bag. Waxed paper sandwich bags (available at Oceana Market in Eureka Square, Pacifica) would be helpful if you can find them. Then return to the assigned area for J.R. Blair to identify and discuss them. The more mushrooms collected, the better! Rain does NOT cancel the event, so do dress accordingly.

This collection of mushrooms is for the Mycological Society of San Francisco's Fungus Fair at El Camino High School 1320 Mission Rd, South San Francisco. The Fungus Fair will take place on Sunday, December 8th from 10:00 am – 5:00 pm.

We need a good turnout, so please sign up on Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mushroom-mycoblitz-with-jr-blair-tickets-1060515533509>

About the leader: J.R. Blair received his Bachelor's degree at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington and obtained his Master's degree at San Francisco State University in 1999, studying with the accomplished mycologist Dr. Dennis Desjardin. His thesis was “Fungi Associated with Arctostaphylos in Northern California.”



The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park

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

Board of Directors

Mark Golembiewski,
President
Judy Bacon,
Vice President
Raquel Iverson, *Secretary*
Susan Kern, *Treasurer*
Adrian Stroganoff,
Membership
Mila Stroganoff,
Programs & Field Trips
Carl Schwab,
VC Host Coordinator
Melinda Moses,
Trailside Store Manager
Shane Kadlecik,
Promotion/Outreach
Istvan Puski, *Habitat
Restoration Day Leader*
Sharron Walker,
At-large Member
Bing Huey,
At-large Member

Website/IT Guru

Shane Kadlecik

Trail Day Leader

Joseph Piro

Newsletter

Mark Golembiewski, *Editor*

Carolyn Pankow,
Editor Emerita

Mila & Adrian Stroganoff,
Proofreading & Production

Visitor Center

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

Recent Workshop

Overview of Birding 101 Class and Field Trips

by Mila Stroganoff

The Birding 101 class led by J.R. Blair began on September 23rd with 18 people in attendance. Participants of the class took part in four lectures (2 hours each) and the two Saturday field trips (3 hours each). It was a wonderful group of people all interested in furthering their knowledge of birding or, in some cases, beginning their journey in this field.

J.R. discussed and advised us on field guides and brought many to show us. He also went into apps, cost, and how to use them. He discussed binoculars and the various numbers that need to be understood when making a purchase and the pros and cons of the binoculars we all brought to show him.

We certainly needed our binoculars on the Saturday field trips, but we also had the advantage of J.R.'s scope which he set up (*photo at right: J.R. setting up his scope on the cliffs above Pescadero Beach on 10/5/24*). We had to rotate rather quickly to make certain that all of us had a chance to see what the scope was trained on.

We discussed the pros and cons of bird feeders. There is much to know about them but J.R.'s advice to us was to plant native plants which attract birds to them. We then started our journey into the world of Orders, Families, Genera and Species. The Orders and Family names rolled off J.R.'s tongue, but truly they are something to see and to try to pronounce. Thank heavens for common names!



We saw a great many birds on the projection screen and J.R. discussed how to identify them. He gave us a great deal of information. How much we retained, well, that's anyone's guess. Everyone was busy taking notes. The good thing was that J.R. went over some things that he had mentioned in the lectures in the field as well.

(*left: our group assembling at Pescadero Beach on 10/5/24; photos by Mila Stroganoff*)

One thing I can say with certainty, the feedback from the class participants was very positive. The other thing that all of you may have noticed, birds do not stay in one place very long. They are not plants and pose a challenge to see, but especially to identify. Juveniles change their plumage as they mature. Females and males do not look alike. During the spring, males have the most fantastic colors and change how they look. Colors can appear or disappear depending on the lighting. And, honestly, Adrian and I will need many more practice sessions in the field and will spend more time viewing our bird baths having our apps on hand. Wish us luck.

Until next time, happy birding!

(*Additional photos from the two field trips to the Baylands in Palo Alto on September 28th and to Pescadero Beach on October 5th are shown on page 10*)

Recent Program

Dr. Salvador Jorgensen's "Great White Sharks - Population Changes and Ecological Implications" by Bing Huey

The great white shark is an apex predator off the coast of Pacifica and central California. Despite its low abundance it plays a major role in the structure of the ecosystem. This was the subject of the Friends' 24 September webinar program, presented by Dr. Salvador Jorgensen. He is Professor at Cal State Monterey Bay and Director of the Ocean Predator Ecology Lab. For the past 15 years, he and his students have monitored populations of the white sharks, as he calls them, to better understand their life history, especially in a changing climate. In the waters off San Francisco, the shark numbers were at historic lows in the late 1960s. With the arrival of the Marine Mammals Act, populations of elephant seals saw increases and, following a lag of several years, shark populations did as well.

Techniques the Jorgensen group use to track and gather data on the sharks include various forms of electronic tagging such as satellite, acoustic, stomach, and cameras. These are all designed to remain attached to the animal for a set period of time and then detach. Individual sharks can also be identified photographically, either still or video, by scars and patterns on the dorsal fin. Finally, biopsy samples are taken for analysis of DNA or chemical tracers. Trackers are attached to adult white sharks by attracting them to boats using large prey-like decoys.

One important finding is the degree of site fidelity shown by the sharks. In the area of Año Nuevo Island, important for elephant seals, a shark tag popped up one year after being attached in the same location. Satellite data, however, showed that in that time the shark had traveled to Hawaii and back. This turned out to be true for a substantial portion of the adult population, with the remainder of the adults migrating to an intermediate zone in the Pacific. Conjecturing that it might involve feeding or mate-finding, Jorgensen called the region the "café" zone. When migration patterns are mapped together with the zones of high productivity in the Pacific, as indicated by chlorophyll concentrations, there is no overlap, indicating that food availability is not the primary purpose for the offshore migrations. Sharks predictably return to the California coast from the offshore sites in October and November, coinciding with the fall peak of when juvenile elephant seals haul out. The sharks do not appear for the seal haul out that occurs in the spring. The site fidelity shown by the sharks, confirmed by the tracking data, accounts for how the white shark populations in the northeast Pacific came to be genetically isolated for an estimated 200,000 years.

The photo ID method was used in the study sites. With about 4,000 individuals identified to date, the researchers observed about a 60% resighting. Data from these studies suggest that the white shark populations in central California are increasing, but only the adults and not juveniles. The photo IDs also reveal the longevity of these animals, with perfectly matching dorsal fin images captured 24 years apart.

Being too small to consume elephant seals, juvenile white sharks are not attracted to decoys, and need to be stealthily pursued to be tagged and tracked. Data acquired up until ten years ago show the distribution of juvenile sharks to be confined to nursery areas that ranged from Baja California north to about Pt. Concepcion. This area is a shared pupping area for two different adult populations. Adults can be of a population that migrates between central California and one of the offshore locations, or of one that migrates between Guadalupe Island off the Baja coast and the offshore areas. As the juveniles approach maturity at around three years they leave the nursery area and are recruited into either one of the adult populations.

The marine heat wave phenomenon of 2014 combined with periodic events such as El Niño resulted in significant changes to distribution of the juveniles. They began to appear as far north as Monterey Bay, concentrating in an especially warm area, and were increasing in numbers there as of 2019. Dr. Jorgensen explained that white sharks are actually endothermic, maintaining a core temperature of about 25 degC. With a larger surface to volume ratio, small juveniles are more prone to heat loss and will migrate to find areas of optimal temperature. Historic sea temperatures showed a "cold barrier" at approximately 34 degree latitude. Following 2014, water temperatures favorable to juvenile white sharks occurred as far north as 37 degree latitude. For the white shark, it means a poleward range shift of some 177 miles and possible contraction of range. For other organisms in the environment the shift is also impactful, both by the warming temperature and by the arrival of a top predator.

Sharks are known to mistakenly target humans and sea otters as prey. For adults this seems especially true during their migration back from offshore areas. In recent years bites have increased on sea otters, whose range is centered around Monterey Bay, and are occurring earlier and aligning with the appearance of juvenile white sharks. Otters are not a prey item for the sharks, and once bitten, the otters usually are stranded and die.

(continued on page 4)

An Unusually Quiet Day When Alone

by Joseph Piro

Our September 14, 2024 Trail Day was pretty quiet -- just **me**. The others who usually participate couldn't make it due to illness and other conflicts.

I took advantage of the sunny, Fall-feeling morning to trim and rake things along the Sun Garden path that meanders alongside the Visitor's Center and rake around the path and bench behind the VC patio. Enjoy the park!



A Fine New-Comer for our October Trail Day

by Joseph Piro

My brother **Erik** and **I** were met by a new-comer -- a friendly local fellow named **Ken** -- for our October 12, 2024 Trail Day. He had only been on the Weiler Ranch and Valley View side of the Park, so we went up the Hazelnut Trail behind the Visitor's Center and cleared out drain dips and ditches all the way up to the bench. And when we returned back down to the parking lot, we met up with **Istvan Puski** and then we all took a short walk up the Old Trout Farm Trail to the water department gate, where things looked good. Enjoy the trails this Fall!

(Note: Due to a camera equipment malfunction, the group photo taken on this day couldn't be retrieved)

Great White Sharks (continued from page 3)

Otter bites are more frequent at the edge of their range. Their primary habitat is the kelp forest in the vicinity of Monterey Bay, and the otters, as well as seals, can find refuge there. Data show that more bites occur outside the kelp forests.

The behavior of white sharks in the presence of another top predator is another fascinating finding by Jorgensen's team. Orcas sightings appear to coincide with both seasonal haul-outs of elephant seals. Using acoustic trackers, movements of white sharks were observed in the vicinity of the Farallones when orcas entered the area. All the sharks disappeared from the area, with many going to other sites monitored in the study, such as Año Nuevo or Tomales Bay. Sharks did not return to the area until the next season.

Dr. Jorgensen spoke of other current and future work his group is doing. His talk has been recorded and is available through the Friends' website.

~ November / December Calendar ~

November Trail Day

Saturday, Nov. 9 9 am

Dr. Taylor - Lives of Snakes*

Saturday, Nov. 9 7 pm

Nov. Habitat Restoration Day

Saturday, Nov. 16 10 am

Mycoblitz - J.R. Blair **

Saturday, Dec. 7 11 am

December Trail Day

Saturday, Dec. 14 9 am

Friends' Christmas Party

Sunday, December 15 12 pm

Dec. Habitat Restoration Day

Saturday, Dec. 21 10 am

*Zoom webinar registration required

** Eventbrite sign-up required

>> FACTOID <<

DAPHNIA, THE WATER FLEA

She swims around fitfully in the marsh of San Pedro Creek* - trying not to become a dinner for our aquatic insect babies. *She is Daphnia pulex*, a millimeter long crustacean who strokes with her muscular antennae while her fringed appendages are catching her meals, filtering out bacteria, yeast, and a modern day villain, the blue-green "algae" (cyanobacteria) from our waters. This lower life form does especially well in slightly polluted waters, hogging oxygen and cutting off sunlight and can be a death sentence to the algae, plants and animals of our coast. Daphnia is therefore, the hero.



More amazingly, research shows that our daphnia seems to switch toward eating more of a very toxic variety of cyanobacteria when she needs to battle fungus in her own body, which means that researchers are naturally exploring for foe-fighting compounds that the amazing daphnia then automatically releases, ones that might help us battle human fungal diseases.

*Daphnia can live in water containing a fair amount of salt. (Sources: Meghan Duffy's research at U. of Michigan from 2019 'till 2024. Numerous other internet sources. Photo from researchgate.net website)



— Carolyn's Corner —

GIANT PACIFIC SALAMANDER APPETITE?

December: a slippery, usually reclusive predator stalks the creekside. A succulent yellow slug slides slowly beneath some sword ferns where she's been waiting. Two weeks ago, she ambushed a baby deer mouse, which she snapped up with her strong jaws, swallowing him whole. But the banana slug, that's a real challenge: even the worst cooks don't serve glue with dinner.* Finally, it's down the gullet.

Alert! Just as things were going so smoothly, a young weasel - six months old - makes a sinuous lunge towards an "easy" meal, a new, slow creature, but our hefty salamander makes a diverting, attention-grabbing croak of a bark, which gives her time to thrust her tail at the little adversary with a whack. Unnerved and inexperienced, the agile little fella lashes out with a misdirected, glancing bite, tasting a repelling and nauseating odor; a disgusting aftertaste propels him away towards a better meal. Yes, our giant Pacific salamander lives to see another day.



Earlier, in late November, her little larvae slipped into the creek from her carefully guarded wet "nest" of eggs, but only after almost 4 months of tending by mom. During that suspended time, each of the 30 lived off the yolk their mother put time and energy into forming. No wonder this energy-saving, cold-blooded creature loosed her delayed desires with an astonishing appetite. A gentle rain is falling now as she creeps into her log-sheltered, shallow burrow.

Walter Colquhoun and Jim Mackey are two of the folks who were amazed to see one of these perhaps foot-long amphibians on the Trout Farm Trail during our rainy season. Observe and report, Ok?

*On the California Herps website (<https://www.californiaherps.com>) there are two photos of our giant pacific salamanders with banana slugs engulfed into their mouths.

FINDS FOR NOVEMBER / DECEMBER

During your end-of-the-year wanderings in the park, look for:

Salamanders of other species and snap a photo? In late December, you may see the first of the tiny bell-shaped flowers of the brittle leaf manzanita, later the Montara Mountain manzanita, both mainstays of the winter diet of Anna's Hummingbirds. And outrageous bloomers, the chaparral currant display their pink flowers for the Anna's, offering blossom nectar in these floristically leaner months.

Are you Interested in Helping with Our New Digital Herbarium Project?

In the Visitor Center, we currently have an old display of herbarium sheets – dried and pressed plant samples for about 35 species that are found in the park. These herbarium sheets have been around for quite some time and are showing their age.

To update this display and provide more plant information for park visitors, we are working on the Herbarium Project, which will replace the pressed flower sheets with a digital library of the plants that can be found in San Pedro Valley Park. The goal is to provide information on how to identify plants, including photos, key characteristics, bloom time and flower color, trail locations and more.

We have just begun collecting plant information and designing page layouts. The first set of plant pages to be created will be for the 10 tree species that have the newly installed plaques with images created by the Nature Journalers. When this phase of the Herbarium project is completed, visitors will be able to click a QR code to access the information page for that tree on the Friends of San Pedro Valley website.

Then we will move on to build info pages for more plants in the park. To do this we'd love to add some more folks to work on this project. Are you interested in learning how to take photos for the plant pages or learning more on how to identify plants in the park? We hope to develop a class or training session for this so look for information early next year. In the meantime, if you are interested in helping collect plant information, providing photographs, identifying trail locations for plants, or just want to learn more about this project, **contact Melanie Heisler** at mmheisler@comcast.net

Friends of SPVP Annual Membership Meeting, Election and Barbecue

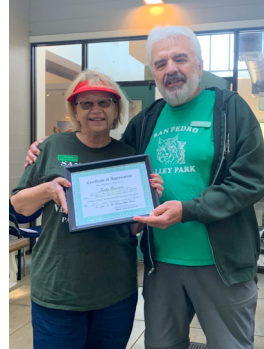
The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park's annual membership meeting and election was held at the Visitor Center on Sunday, September 22nd, followed immediately by our traditional fall BBQ. About 25 members attended.



The annual election of officers for the group's Board of Directors was held to begin the meeting. Nominating committee chair, Mila Stroganoff, skillfully conducted the brief exercise, including asking for nominations from the floor. As a result, the nominated slate of officers for 2025 was elected: President: Mark Golembiewski; Vice-President: Judy Bacon; Secretary: Open position; Treasurer: Susan Kern. We were unable to find a candidate for the office of Secretary by the time of the meeting.

The meeting concluded with new President, Mark Golembiewski, presenting withdrawing President, Judy

Bacon (*at right*), with a Certificate of Appreciation for her 5 years of devoted and caring (and fun-filled) service in heading the Board. That was followed by his presentation of a similar certificate to retiring Secretary, Enid Ansgarius (*at far right*), for her 5 years of loyal and steadfast service to the Board.



Our barbecue immediately followed the members meeting, led by our traditional grill chef, Joseph Piro. As always, the "burgers and dogs" were grilled to perfection, and the sides and deserts brought by the attendees to share were top notch, as well. We even had the 'fixins' for root beer floats! (*see photo at right*)



And we couldn't have a BBQ without a group photo. Thanks (again) to Joseph Piro, who came equipped (as always) with his camera and tripod, we were able to capture the group who remained near the end.

Once again, a good time was had by all who came! Join us for next year's event.

We Need Volunteers!!

The Friends of SPVP are continually looking for new volunteers. If you are interested in learning more about how you can help us out and give something back to the park you enjoy so much - whether it's being a host at the Visitor Center on weekends, helping to maintain the trails and the Native Plant Garden, removing invasive plants, or working on special projects - **please contact us** by talking with one of our Visitor Center hosts or by dropping us a note via email: FriendsofSanPedroValley@gmail.com We'd love to talk with you!

On The Nature Journaling Trail

by Sharron Walker

The Nature Journal Tree Plaques are installed! It was a little over a year ago that the San Pedro Valley Park Nature Journalers proposed the Tree Plaque Project to Katherine Wright's Interpretative Planning Department at San Mateo County Parks. The project was accepted and nine of us took on the challenge of creating tree plaques. The plaques are on nine trees in the South Parking area and one, the giant Monterey Cypress, is located at the Walnut Grove Picnic Area. We are also planning to include a QR code on each post, so that if visitors want more information about a particular tree, they can quickly access it - on the spot - using their smart phone. That part of the project is still a work in progress.

Katherine Wright's Interpretative Department installed the posts and the plaques themselves -- a major undertaking by quite the team of female rangers! (shown at right; Katherine, Tracy Nappi and Raquel Henriquez - Installing!)

On Friday, October 18, a completion celebration was held for the Nature Journaler/Artists at our visitor center.



(shown at left receiving their Certificate Awards - L to R: Sharron Walker, Vivian Walz, Annie Blair, Kathy Miller, Caitlin Corley, Melanie Heisler, Jane Gomery, Katherine Wright)



Nature Journaling is not about fine art, but we all knew the art work had to be good! And all of the Tree Plaques are excellent! Each plaque is unique, designed by the journaler.



After certificates of appreciation were awarded by Katherine Wright to the nature journalers, we took a "Tree Plaque Walk" to view all the installations. (see photo at right - Sharron speaking to the group)

Those nature journalers who were present talked about their plaques. (at left, Katherine and Melanie pose after Melanie describes her plaque of the Coast Live Oak)



(all photos by Bevan Jones)

Come check out the plaques! They are a great addition to our park!

The San Pedro Valley Park Nature Journalers meet monthly. For more information contact: Sharronlee@aol.com

Friends of SPVP Christmas Party is Coming Up!

With our Halloween celebrations just completed (trick or treating for the young ones and costume parties for us older folks), the Holiday Season is now truly upon us! That means it's time to plan for our annual, year-end **Christmas party**, which this year will be held on **Sunday, December 15 at 12:00 pm** (the Visitor Center will be closed to the general public that day). Since several of our members told us last year they wouldn't be attending because of the darkness at the starting time of 6 pm, we decided to change this year's event to a luncheon rather than a dinner. We hope this will allow more members to attend.

Drinks and appetizers will be offered during the "cocktail hour" before our luncheon begins. Baked turkey and ham will again be provided as the main course, with members being asked to bring sides and desserts to share with all.

We will be having a little fun again this year with our traditional, after-dinner gift exchange (back by popular demand). A \$10 maximum per gift is suggested if you choose to participate.

Please RSVP to Judy Bacon at judybaconegg@gmail.com and let her know the dish(es) that you plan to bring. Members will be contacted regarding attendance. See you there with your Santa hat on!

Tabling Event at San Mateo County Parks' 1st Annual FallFest

by Melinda Moses

On Saturday October 12, Board President Mark Golembiewski and Bookstore Manager Melinda Moses traveled down to Quarry Park in El Granada for the first annual San Mateo County Parks FallFest. As with Summer Fest, this was a free community event hosted by the County Rangers.

Quarry Park was a big difference from the vast expanses of Coyote Point Recreation Area, the FOSPVP's last tabling event in August. Quarry Park is 517, mostly wooded, acres, that are tucked back into an El Granada neighborhood on the southeast side of town. There is a Community Garden, playground, picnic tables, pump track, and trails open to dogs, bikes and equestrians.

We joined about 20 other agencies and groups on the flats just beyond the playground. The weather was good; a bit of high fog and to our great relief, little to no wind! It had been a challenge keeping maps and such from taking flight when the afternoon winds came up at the Pacific Beach Coalition Earth Day event at Linda Mar beach and the Coyote Point SummerFest.



The FallFest brought in lots of families who enjoyed visiting the San Mateo County Library bookmobile, a CAL Fire truck, a CHP cruiser, Taiko drummers, food trucks and what was probably the most fun for a number of kids; huge bubbles being created by a gentleman with a tub of soapy water and variety of poles with attachments producing child-sized bubbles.

As with the SummerFest, the rangers handed out cards for children to get stamped at each table they visited. A completed card earned them a San Mateo County Parks frisbee along with learning about other State and County parks to visit in the area, what firefighters and police officers do,

and collecting stickers and coloring books.

Having fine-tuned the Community event tabling process, Mark and Melinda were ready with SPVP maps, County Park info, SPVP coloring pages, bobcat stickers, and the ever-popular bowl of Hershey kisses!

The FOSPVP look forward to perhaps hosting one of the popular 'Fests' at San Pedro Valley at some point in the future.



Additional Photos from Birding 101 Class — Field Trips



View of Pescadero Beach from cliffs
taken on 10/5/24 by Mlla Stronganoff



Great Egret
taken on 09/28/24 by Raquel Iverson
at the Baylands in Palo Alto



Northern Shoveler
taken on 09/28/24 by Raquel Iverson
at the Baylands in Palo Alto



American Avocet
taken on 09/28/24 by Raquel Iverson
at the Baylands in Palo Alto



Snowy Egret
taken on 09/28/24 by Raquel Iverson
at the Baylands in Palo Alto

Bing Huey's Continuing and Fascinating Study of Insects in SPVP



Monkey flower and ant
taken on 08/15/24



Rein orchid
taken on 08/30/24
along the Montara Mountain Trail



Skipper on Goldenrod
taken on 08/30/24
along the Montara Mountain Trail



Skipper on Aster
taken on 08/30/24
along the Montara Mountain Trail

<< ON THE TRAIL >>

with Laurie Nikitas



Western Skink
taken on 08/26/24
along the Valley View Trail
(in the eucalyptus forest at
the west end of trail)



Black-tailed deer twins
(with mom & dad just behind)
taken in 10/24
on Visitor Center lawn



Wild turkey - Mother with family
nearby
taken in 10/24
near the fence along St. Peters
property

Common Garter snake
taken in 10/24
(location forgotten)

