Valley Views

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park March / April 2026

Upcoming Programs

A March Zoom Webinar with John Kipping
"A Day in the Life of a Salmon"

Please join the Friends of San Pedro Valley Park on **Saturday, March 21st at 7 pm** as they welcome back John Kipping on the topic of "A Day in the Life of a Salmon." The northeastern Pacific is home to five species of salmon: chinook, coho, keta, pink, and sockeye. These amazing and tasty fish have been of great importance to both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. They can be considered keystone species as so many other life forms are affected by their activities. Join naturalist John Kipping as we venture into the breeding areas of Southeast Alaska and British Columbia where these fishes return to their freshwaters to breed and die. During this presentation we also learn about the food webs ashore and at sea which are sustained by these vital fish.

About the Presenter: John Kipping is a lifelong naturalist who began his career at 14 as animal caretaker at the Randall Museum in San Francisco. After moving to his present home in El Dorado County from Pacifica's Shelter Cove, John became a Certified Arborist and managed his own tree service while spending summers guiding in Alaska and leading tours to New Zealand, Galapagos, and the whale lagoons of Baja California.

Please register in advance for this webinar using the following link:
https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_2MbLLRShQjeITAxmLKVZww

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

An April Zoom Webinar with Dr. Ricardo Kriebel
"How Precise Pollen Placement has Aided Diversification in Salvia"

On Saturday, **April 25th at 7 pm,** the Friends of San Pedro Valley Park welcome Dr. Ricardo Kriebel, who will present a Zoom lecture entitled, "How precise pollen placement has aided diversification in Salvia." With over 300,000 species, angiosperms (flowering plants) exhibit exceptional structural diversity in vegetative and reproductive traits. These traits have facilitated their spread across most terrestrial environments. Salvia, which is in the Lamiaceae / Mint family, has more than 1,000 species and is among the largest angiosperm genera. It is notable for its floral diversification. This diversity has been widely attributed to the mechanism that enables precise pollen placement on pollinators. In this talk, Dr. Kriebel will examine the evolutionary history of this mechanism and will present new observations about it. Join us for what should prove to be a very interesting presentation on pollination mechanisms.

About the Speaker: Ricardo Kriebel is a Costa Rican botanist who secured his PhD in plant sciences from the City University of New York in a joint program with the New York Botanical Garden, and currently serves as Assistant Curator and McAllister Chair of Botany at the California Academy of Sciences. His main interests are the taxonomy and evolution of the princess flower family Melastomataceae and the mint family Lamiaceae.

Please register in advance for this webinar by using the following link:
https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_isXcN4N6ShWDdfkvPdC31g

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

The Friends of
San Pedro Valley Park

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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.

Introducing Our New Volunteer Coordinator

We are pleased to announce that Raquel Iverson, formerly our Secretary on the FSPVP Board of Directors, has now taken over from Carl Schwab as the Visitor Center Host Coordinator (as of February 1st). Meanwhile, Carl has assumed the responsibilites of Secretary (they have essentially swapped roles on the board). But in addition to taking on Carl's prior role as VC Host Coordinator, Raquel's new position has been renamed as Volunteer Coordinator and is expanding to become a newly-scoped role in which she intends to coordinate and oversee all of the volunteer-related activities at the park. Raquel will be overseeing not only the VC hosts, but also our trail and habitat restoration activities, as well as orienting new volunteers. She is looking forward to the challenges and excitement of working with current volunteers and recruiting new volunteers to our organization.

If you have ideas, questions or comments for Raquel, send her a note at: vc@fspvp.org

<< Search for New Vice President for Board of Directors >>

We are currently **seeking to fill the open position of Vice President** on the Friends' Board of Directors, which has been vacant since last August when Judy Bacon, then the VP, stepped down from the board due to health concerns (she has now re-joined the board as an at-large member).

The Friends' VP supports the President by taking on various tasks and projects assigned by the President and serves as the President's backup when he/she is temporarily unable to perform their usual Presidential duties. The Vice President also has the opportunity to serve as a manager of special projects, either ones of his/her own choosing or those assigned by the President.

So if you, or someone you know, may be interested in filling this open Board of Director position, **please contact your Editor/President** via email at president@fspvp.org, **or inquire via one of our other board members**. We would love to speak with you.

5th Annual Friends of SPVP Photo Contest!

On March 1, 2026, we will launch our 2026 **Friends Photo Contest**! Once again, it will run until May 1st and will be **open to all park visitors**.

The four entry categories will remain the same: 1) Flora, 2) Fauna, 3) Trails & Landscapes, and 4) People in the Park. Photos entered in the contest must be taken between May 1, 2025 & May 1, 2026. Guidelines with detailed submittal instructions for entrants will be sent to members in early March and again in April, with that same information posted on our website for all other park visitors.

The 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners in each category will be awarded recognition ribbons and these winning images will be printed and displayed in the Visitor Center for about three months. All winning images will also be posted on our website and presented in this newsletter, as well. Visitors to SPVP who view the displayed contest photos will have the opportunity to vote on their favorite image (by paper ballot) and the photograph that gets the most votes at the end of the display period will be declared winner of the Friends' "People's Choice Award."

So whether you're a budding photo artist with a smart phone or a more seasoned nature photographer, come join us by entering the Friends Photo Contest of 2026 and have some additional inspiration and fun while taking photos in the park. Or start going through your photo library to see if you might already have any award-winning images from last year that you could enter.

Whatever your level of expertise, we want to see your Best Shots of SPVP!

Recent Program

Dr. Tom Parker's "Manzanitas and their Animals: Keys to Evolution"

by Bing Huey

Dr. Tom Parker is well known to the Friends for his presentations on the manzanitas and chaparral, which are a major habitat type in San Pedro Valley Park. For his talk of 17 January 2026, given as a webinar, he focused on the relationship between manzanitas and their animal associates.

Manzanitas comprise the most diverse woody plant genus in California, where the large majority of species is located. A few species range to British Columbia, the Cascades, and the Rockies. Most are adapted to the semi-arid, semi-closed canopy vegetation that are the chaparral. In California, most species occur near the coast with its moisture from fog, thus making it relatively mesic for a chaparral plant. Within gaps in the coastal mountains, the shrubs proliferate and different geographic locales hosts separate species. Fire, too, is part of the ecology here, and seed banks stimulated by fire lead to quick recovery by manzanitas.

Within the five genera in the subfamily Arbutoideae, there are dichotomies in flowering times and in fruit and seed types. These determine the way animal species utilize the plant. Late bloomers generally produce fleshy fruit and rely on birds for seed dispersal. Early bloomers generally produce dry fruit and seeds that are dropped. These are dispersed by rodents. The genus Arctostaphylos, the manzanitas, are of the latter group. Their seeds are dormant and need fire and smoke, or the low temperature of winter, to germinate. However, to avoid seed predators and destruction by fire, they need to be buried in soil. Manzanita fruit and nutlets are too large to bury by themselves, so require activity of animals. Coyote and bears consume the fruit, but produce scat that leaves the seed on the surface. It takes rodents to disperse and cache, who then usually die before eating them, adding to the seed bank.

With insects, associations are numerous and varied. A five-year study found the number of insect species associated with the green leaf manzanita, A. patula, to be 539, for example. Among these species are herbivores, seed predators, pollinators, and seed dispersers. An herbivore like a leaf miner, might need to overcome chemical repellents produced by the manzanita. An aphid produces galls on leaves of the big berry manzanita to house and feed its larvae, only to have it invaded by other aphids. Native ants and spiders find homes in cavities in the bark of the manzanita and become food for insectivorous birds like the wrentit and black phoebe. Pollinators are mostly hummingbirds and insects. Bumblebees appear early and others follow. Some bees, like the andrenids, have short tongues and drill through the flowers for nectar and pollen. The pink of the blossoms attracts hummingbirds and butterflies, such as the mourning cloak. The fruit have an edible outer part, with seeds encased in a hard nutlet. A separate wave of specialized insects arrive to lay eggs in the seed chamber and other parts of the fruit. One can find fruit showing a tiny hole where an insect has emerged, having consume the seeds within. Usually three or four seeds are left, out of six or seven to begin with.

Rodent caching is the key process by which manzanita seed are preserved and dispersed. Experiments carried out by Dr. Parker and his students used fluorescent powder to track their trails and caches. The caches differentiate between Arctostaphylos and Ceanothus seed, largely favoring the former, the woody plant. To elucidate why the fruit are not found and consumed by other rodents, experiments show that older nutlets are not found, while fresh fruit are, suggesting that, after the fruity parts decompose, the nutlet produces no odor.

Interrelationships between manzanitas and other species walk a line between mutualism and predation/ parasitism. Rodents that bury fruit, but subsequently not retrieve them, are mutualisms. Those that bury and then eat them are predators. Ecologically, this is called conditional mutualism.

Dr. Parker expanded the discussion beyond the animal kingdom to mutualism between manzanitas and soil microbes, specifically mycorrhizal fungi. The fungal hyphae spread to nutrient sources, break them down, and absorb them. These are then transported to the manzanita roots, with which fungi form close physical contact. This enables manzanitas to live with poor soils and low water availability. In exchange, the manzanita provide photosynthetic sugars to the fungi. This mutualism becomes parasitic when adjacent conifers, which associate with and benefit from the same mycorrhizal network as the manzanita, grow large enough to shade and crowd out the manzanita.

The recording of this lecture by Dr. Parker can be viewed through the Friends' website at:

https://friendsofsanpedrovalleypark.org/manzanitas-their-animals/

A Beautiful Day to Begin the New Year!

by Joseph Piro

Happy New Year! Mary Larsen, Stan Jensen, Dwight Brown, my brother Erik and I kicked off our January 10, 2026 Trail Day. It was a sunny and chilly morning as we

headed up the Brooks Falls Trail. We made it up to the bench overlooking the falls and along the way trimmed some branches, shoveled out some drain dips and cleared away some small piles of dirt that slumped onto the trail.

We came back down via the Trout Farm Trail and then worked on the first big drain dip and culvert pipe at the start of the Hazelnut Trail behind the VC, clearing sticks and mud away to help keep the run-off water flowing.

Enjoy another year on the trails!

A Holiday of Work on the Hazelnut Trail

by Joseph Piro

Happy Valentine's Day from your favorite trail crew! Mary Larsen, Stan Jensen, Dwight Brown, my brother Erik and I gave the west end of the Hazelnut Trail some Valentine's Day love for our February 14, 2026 Trail Day.

Making it all the way up to the big wood retaining wall (around a mile), we worked on around 30 drain dips. Some spots were minor (just a quick scrape out) while others were a bit more work (like building several new ones).

It was all good work ahead of some rainy weather in the forecast. Enjoy the trails!

~ March / April '26 Calendar ~

March Trail Day
Saturday, March 14 ..... 9 am

March Habitat Restoration Day
Saturday, March 21 ..... 10 am

Salmon - Zoom Webinar*
Saturday, March 21 ..... 7 pm

April Trail Day
Saturday, April 11 ..... 9 am

Earth Day Celebration Event**
Wednesday, April 22 ..... 10 am

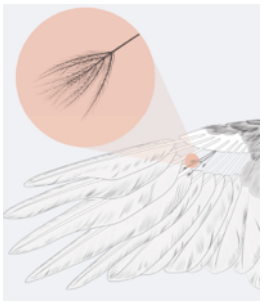
Pollen on Salvia - Zoom Webinar*
Saturday, April 25 ..... 7 pm

**** Zoom webinar registration required***
***** No Habitat Restoration on April 18***

>> FACTOID <<

"Helper or Engineer? The Filoplume"

Why are miniscule, fan-shaped wisps of feathers needed to fill in all spaces between the beautiful, fantastically-competent flight feathers of avians? Aren't flight feathers amazing on their own, in that they effortlessly respond to a bird's needs or wishes to turn, twist, dive, land or rise into the sky? Problem: flight feathers, like contour feathers, have no nerve endings, but the tiny filoplumes do. They receive "messages" from their contact with the main plumes and have sensitive touch receptors that connect to nerves. In that way, they give their directions to the main actor; they provide a constant feedback to the bird's brain on the aerodynamic state of a wing - on airflow and speed, allowing birds to orient their flight feathers for maximum control.



Location of filoplumes

Nineteenth century scientists were able to use the microscope to see nerve endings on the filoplume, but their exact function was up for grabs. You can read the latest research done on filoplumes and flight feathers by Vanya G. Rohwer, curator of birds and mammals at Cornell University and his father, in the Tuesday, Feb. 14 issue of the San Francisco Chronicle. You'll find that these wispy barbed feathers have more than flight functions.

Other souces: Journal of Comparative Physiology, vol 175, 1994; allaboutbirds.org website: Google plus "filoplumes;" AI - read about "nature's whiskers"

— Carolyn's Corner —

***Editor's note**: This will be the last of Carolyn's writings on nature that will appear in this special space. Ms. Pankow has informed me that she feels her writing has become "pedestrian" as her physical and mental energy has waned. So she will continue to grace us with a 'Factoid' piece each issue, but this 'corner' of the newsletter will cease to exist.*

I have enjoyed Carolyn's distinctive writings and being able to showcase them in Valley Views since September 2022, when I took over from her as Editor. This last column marks the end of a special era in the history of the Friends and I am honored to have been a small part of it. She will be missed.

SAGA of the SWAINSON'S HAWK

Can you believe one amazing Golden State hawk migrates 12,000 miles in a year? The champion long-distance flyer is the Swainson's, a large hawk, who is a summer resident of fields and grasslands of the West,* with an isolated, but prime, parcel of real estate in Northern California's Siskayou County. This buteo glides and pulses its long narrow wings and uses its knowledge of tail winds and thermals to travel from our Golden State's alfalfa fields, full of plagues of crop-chomping insects and ground squirrels, to the grasshopper-strewn plains of Argentina. Back in the early 20th century, there were over 17,000 mating pairs of these impressive raptors in California alone. But surviving in this world with billions of humans is not an easy task.

Swainson's - Long, narrow wings of this great migrator

In an effort to feed our multitudes, the DDT "solution" nearly wiped out all the birds at the top of the food web in the United States, including the Swainson's Hawks. After its numbers plummeted, and DDT was outlawed, its numbers skyrocketed back, from hundreds to thousands. Yet in our state's Siskayou County, two men who had been religiously monitoring this raptor noticed that, over the years, a few of their banded pairs were not returning, with a rather alarming drop occurring in 1979.

Wildlife scientists Pete Bloom and Brian Woodbridge had learned to love these fierce predators like family and each year climbed the shard-like bark of juniper trees, sometimes sweltering in a 100 degrees Fahrenheit oven. To add insult to injury, they were garbed in thick protective layers and helmets for purloining the baby Swainson's out of the high nests for banding. They had to brave the frantic swoops and dives of talon-armed killer parents who tried to protect their babies from dangerous thieves who were perched precariously in the "aerie", grabbing their young.

Vigilance and endurance paid off for these two heroes. They were among the first to be cognizant of the crisis of the early 90's, when in Siskayou County, as well as in most parts of California and the West, the numbers of Swainson's hawks took an especially deep dive in less than two years. The Problem: even though a few of Bloom, Woodbridge and "company's" banded birds had been recovered from the fertile plains of Argentina, they had no idea of the exact route through Mexico and Central America this population followed; they were stumped. Where exactly were the killing fields?

Migration routes of the Swainson's hawk toward Argentina

One summer in the mid 1990's, a local national park ranger sprang for thousands of dollars to purchase two miraculous, new, satellite-capable transmitters with tiny microchips. With the grateful team, he gambled that a 3-lb hawk could carry it on her back for thousands of miles. Two healthy, dominant, female Siskayou Swainson's were selected and equipped; one device conked out in Costa Rica, but the other device and mom were pinpointed to La Pampa province, Argentina, with its fields of crops and succulent hoppers and other delicious fare. This was clearly the summer feeding ground for the Siskayou's Swainson's Hawks.

The National Science Foundation and National Geographic then financed a study trip to this province so a Woodbridge team could see these migrating hawks in large numbers. They saw thousands of happily feeding Swainson's, but to their horror, they also saw equally huge numbers of dead hawks, some with dead grasshoppers in their mouths. After painstaking analysis, these field scientists zeroed on a lethal pesticide. The culprit was an organophosphate, Monocrotophos, a short-lived, but extremely toxic, killer of man and beast.

(continued on page 6)

SAGA of the SWAINSON'S HAWK *(continued from page 5)*

The good part of this story is that the local population and the government of Argentina were anxious to keep this beautiful insect and mouse killer around: ranchers rallied around the hawk. Schools educated their youngsters, and the Government of Argentina promoted educational flyers. Swainson's hawk pairs were flourishing in California and the West as of 2021.

But new threats always loom; presently, money-making strawberries from the Central Valley pose one such threat. They are pulled from that excruciatingly hot zone and replanted in this somewhat cooler region (along the coast) during the northern summer. This tasty fruit is now crowding out the alfalfa, the greatest provider in this Swainson's Siskayou ecosystem, posing a new challenge for scientists and environmental organizations.

* This impressive hawk was even sighted once in SPVP; 8 Swainson's /year are seen from Hawk Hill, Marin Headlands and one chick was found in that paradise for hawks, Coyote Valley, near San Jose.

Some sources: "World on the Wing," by Scott Weidensaul, Chapter 7 - was by far my greatest source. Also: birdsoftheworld.org; americanornithology.org; AI (hogging the show, but doesn't think out of the box

WHAT to LOOK FOR in MARCH / APRIL

Look for the beautiful blue-to-red-violet bloom of the hound's tongue on many trails, but especially along the Hazelnut.

Also keep an eye out during your walks in early March for the lovely, blossoming, three-leaf trillium you will find all along the Plaskon Nature Trail, at the north and south ends of the Hazelnut, and along the upper slopes of the Trout Farm Trail as you pass the old ruins before joining the Brooks Creek Trail.

Meet the San Francisco Lacewing by Bing Huey

This past Spring I photographed a San Francisco lacewing (*Nothochrysa californica*) near the start of the Hazelnut Trail *(Fig. 1)*. It was cause for some excitement since it had been some 10 years since my last sighting of one. In March 2015, I observed one depositing an egg on a dried fern frond along the Hazelnut *(Fig. 2)*. I observed it for a short while, took a couple photos, then continued up the trail, noting its location. On my return, I could see the same frond folded over, perhaps enclosing the egg but obscuring my ability to confirm this species' habit of laying eggs on the tips of stalks. In the intervening years I've kept an eye out for them along the trails, but the vegetation where I first observed it has largely been removed from along the trail.

Figure 1 - San Francisco lacewing - 2025

The San Francisco lacewing is in the same family as the green lacewing also found in the park. Besides morphological differences, the San Francisco lacewing has a distinctive behavior where, following mating, the female is left with the spermatophore and a yellowish foamy substance on the dorsal surface of her abdomen. This is visible on the individual photographed in 2025. They are also among a number of insects whose larvae are known to camouflage themselves by attaching sand and mineral particles to itself. The conservation status of the species has not been established.

Figure 2 - San Francisco lacewing - 2015

Observations have been reported in iNaturalist, Lostcoastoutpost.com, and bugguide.net (the source for the life history information here), among others. Most of these appear not far inland from the coast, but none from SPVP. In their pamphlet on the San Francisco Watershed, the SFPUC lists the San Francisco lacewing as a rare, threatened, or endangered species protected on their property.

~~~ JOIN US for a CELEBRATION of EARTH DAY in SPVP ~~~

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park will once again celebrate Earth Day in 2026 with a restoration work party in the park. This year, this event will take place on the actual commemorative Earth Day, which is **Wednesday, April 22nd** (replacing our usual Habitat Restoration event on the 3rd Saturday of each month). And it will again be a "rescue" day for the plants in our beloved, but neglected, Native Plant Garden, as we go after removing the usual suspects of invasive plants, weeds and plant debris. We will be concentrating our efforts on trying to enhance the garden and help bring it back to its former healthy and well-tended appearance. This year's event will take place **from 10 am until 1 pm** next to the Visitor Center. Just bring your gloves and your sun hats...we'll supply the tools and the knee pads!

The two areas comprising the SPVP Native Plant Garden - there is a second section of garden located adjacent to the outdoor patio inside the fenced area of the Visitor Center that many visitors do not see - are ambassadors for the wild and wonderful biodiversity of our park, so we need to have the plants in the garden be able to show themselves at their best for our visitors.

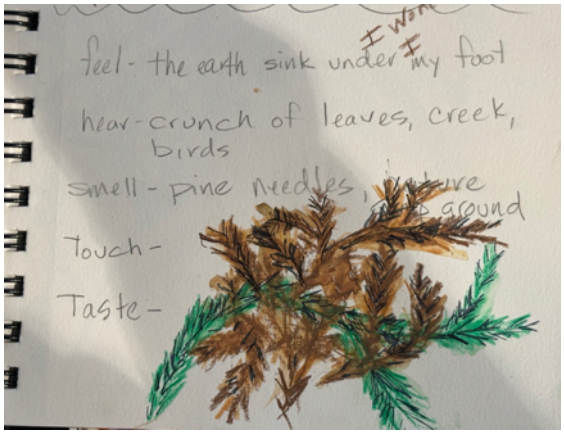
We hope you can join us for this annual celebration of the native plant life in this, our tiny corner of the planet.

On The Nature Journaling Trail

by Sharron Walker

The San Pedro Valley Park Nature Journalers kicked off the year at their January 22 meeting by connecting our 5 senses to nature. Sometimes it is good to simply "be" with nature, especially during these difficult times. Our activity was to find a "sit space" outdoors and be aware of all our senses: hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and touching. Then we were to choose a color that seemed to best connect to our personal experience. We then returned to our group indoors to share our observations and journal. A successful day of journaling and sharing!

Wendy's Snyder's journal page of duff *(photo at right)* is one of the pages generated. If you are unaware of "duff," it is the nutrient-rich layer of organic matter covering the forest floor, composed of shed needles, cones, twigs and bark from coast redwood trees. It retains moisture, nourishes the soil and supports microorganisms and provides habitat for wildlife.



5 Senses Redwood Duff by Wendy Snyder

This first meeting of 2026 was well-attended, as there were 14 of us *(see photo below)*. We have come a long way since our first meeting in July 2021!


January Meeting of SPVP Nature Journalers

In February 2025, I was invited to give an "Introduction to Nature Journaling" workshop to volunteers from Edgewood and Huddard County Parks. Their goal was to begin a Nature Journaling group. They now have a Nature Journaling Club! They meet monthly, alternating between Edgewood and Huddard parks. I was invited to attend their January meeting by Beth Harrision who leads the group. If you have not visited these county parks, I suggest you do so. Edgewood is known for its wildflowers and they have docent-guided walks. They both have wonderful trails!

Nature Journaling is a movement, promoted by John Muir Laws and the Wild Wonder Foundation. For more information, search the web for the Wild Wonder Foundation and Nature Journaling, or send a note to: spvpNatureJournalers@gmail.com

Early Blossom Beauties at SPVP by Sharron Walker

Silk tassel: *Garrya elliptica*
taken on 01/22/2026
along walkway from VC to Hazelnut trailhead (south parking lot)

Wild cucumber/California Manroot: *Marah fabaceus*
taken on 02/12/2026
at creek bridge near Plaskon & Hazelnut trailheads

Red flowering currant: *Ribes sanguine*um
taken on 02/12/2026
in the Native Plant Garden

Giant trillium: *Trillium albidum*
taken on 02/12/2026
along the Plaskon Trail

The Wide Variety of Inhabitants to See at SPVP by Bing Huey (and friend)

Tube lichen (*Hypogymnia*)
taken on 01/03/2026
along the Brooks Creek Trail

Slime mold (*Fuligo septica*)
taken on 01/29/2026
along the Brooks Ceek Trail

Beetle (maybe *Altica*) on early willow catkin
taken on 01/20/2026
along the Weiler Ranch Trail

Great blue heron (*Ardea herodias* - a visitor?)
taken by Penney Mitchell on 12/15/2025
near the horseshoe pits/Weiler Ranch Road