



The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park

May / June 2026

## Upcoming Programs

### A May Zoom Webinar with Danaé Mouton

#### “California Condors on the Central Coast: a journey of recovery and resilience”

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park welcome Danaé Mouton, a wildlife biologist with the Ventana Wildlife Society, who will present “California Condors on the Central Coast: a journey of recovery and resilience” on **Tuesday, May 12th at 7 pm**. She will discuss how perilously close to extinction came the California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) and the steps taken to try to prevent this from occurring. She will also discuss the efforts taken to reintroduce the endangered condors back on the Central Coast after all individuals were removed from the wild. The California Condor is still endangered but its numbers in the wild are on the increase. Join us for this incredible journey as Danaé discusses the help and tools needed on the way to a successful species recovery.



**About the Presenter:** Danaé Mouton is originally from North Carolina and graduated from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill with a B.S. in Biology in 2017. She first fell in love with Condors when she began working at Pinnacles National Park in 2019. She joined the Ventura Wildlife Society Condor Crew as a Biologist in October 2021. Danaé began her wildlife career working with carnivores in Arizona and Idaho. She then became fascinated by birds after spending a season bird banding in Nova Scotia, Canada. Since then, she has been involved in several endangered species monitoring projects, including Snail Kites in Florida, Northern Spotted Owls in Marin County, California, and now California Condors here in central California.

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

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_PO6TcXKIQnmO5Penjk-zUA](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_PO6TcXKIQnmO5Penjk-zUA)

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.

---

### A Natural History Walk in San Pedro Valley Park

**Saturday, May 2nd, 2026**

**Time: 10 am – 12 pm**

**This is our Spring Nature Walk** and the first one of the year. Register for a 2-hour nature stroll with J.R. Blair on Saturday, May 2nd at 10 am. We'll get started as soon as everyone has gathered, so please be on time. Remember to bring water, a hat, jacket, and sunscreen. In terms of weather -- heavy rain cancels.

This walk is for nature enthusiasts ages 12 years and older and is limited to 15 people. Please sign up for this event using the following Eventbrite link:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-nature-walk-in-san-pedro-valley-park-tickets-1987423128076?aff=oddtcreator>

**About the leader:** J.R. Blair received his Bachelor's degree at the 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. He was a lecturer of biology at SFSU for 21 years and the director of the University's Sierra Nevada Field Campus for eleven years until his retirement in December 2020.



## 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*

[Open Position],  
*Vice President*

Carl Schwab, *Secretary*

Susan Kern, *Treasurer*

Adrian Stroganoff,  
*Membership*

Mila Stroganoff,  
*Programs & Field Trips*

Raquel Iverson,  
*Volunteer Coordinator*

Melinda Moses,  
*Trailside Store Manager*

Shane Kadlecik,  
*Promotion/Outreach*

Istvan Puski, *Habitat  
Restoration Day Leader*

*At-large Members:*

Sharron Walker

Bing Huey

Judy Bacon

### Website/IT Specialist

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.

## Upcoming Summer Programs

### Wild Things Returns Again in June to San Pedro Valley Park!

Back by popular demand, the Friends will once again welcome Gabe Kerschner and his wonderful **Wild Things** show to San Pedro Valley Park on **Tuesday, June 16th at 11 am** in the **North Walnut Grove Group Picnic Area**. Last year's wonderful program of rescued animals (including a lap-sitting capybara!) captivated the audience of all ages and Gabe's son, Jojo (a true chip off the old block), brought lots of smiles and laughs to all with his puns and jokes. Everyone loved the show! So do join us. You won't want to miss it!!

**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 to house and care 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 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.

### Photo Contest Now Closed to Entries Winners to be Chosen and Announced Soon!

The Friends' **2026 Photo Contest**, which had been open to all park visitors since March 1st, was **closed** to new entries **on May 1st**. We are now in the process of collecting and reviewing the fine images we have received.

Judging is expected to take place shortly and be completed by May 15th. Look to the Friends' website shortly thereafter for the announcement of the winners in each of the four contest categories.

Thank you to all who entered this year's contest!! As was done previously, the winning images will be printed and displayed in the Visitor Center (*see photo from 2024 contest at right*), and all visitors for a period of about 60 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.'

So stay tuned to learn about and see the winners!



## Recent Program

### John Kipping's "A Day In the Life of a Salmon"

by Bing Huey

Presented on 21 March, John Kipping's webinar, titled "A Day In the Life of a Salmon," is an awe-inspiring look at the force of survival that is the Pacific salmon. It's also a chance to share one person's love for the Pacific Northwest and his understanding of the living systems that are at work there. The talk centered on the Pacific salmon (*Oncorhynchus*) species, of which there are five; Chinook (King), Sockeye (Red), Coho (Silver), Pink (Humpy/Humpback), and Chum (Dog/Keta). The Atlantic salmon in the United States, of the genus *Salmo*, have been brought to extinction by the development of water projects.

The journey downstream for the salmon begins about a year after hatching as alevin from eggs laid in redds, or nests, on stream beds. Yolk remains with the alevin and nourishes it for several weeks as they remain in the gravel. They then develop into swimming fry and feed on zooplankton, algae, and small insects. In several weeks, as parr, they develop the barred pattern which camouflages them as they become more active predators, now consuming larger insect larvae and nymphs and small fish. In one to three years, the salmon smolt, undergoing changes in physiology and outward appearance, group for migration to the ocean. Prior to entering the open ocean, some spend time in estuaries. They will spend one to seven years at sea before undergoing another metamorphosis and embark on their upstream migration to spawn. Prior to heading upstream, they will again stay in brackish water for a few days. In British Columbia and Alaska, they await the extreme tides there or heavy rains to begin their trip. They stop eating and devote energy to developing gonads, migrating to the spawning stream, and reproductive behavior, such as courtship, redd building, and nest defense. After spawning, they die within days, the female living slightly longer to guard the nest, then add their corpses to the nourishment of the natal stream.

Chum salmon produce the largest eggs among the five species and will look for stream beds with the largest sized gravel to nest. Pink salmon have the smallest eggs. King salmon are long lived, about eight to nine years, and can grow up to 150 pounds. Their migration takes them through Canada or the Columbia River up into the Rockies at 7000-foot elevation, a distance of 900 to 1200 miles, all on stored oils.

As they themselves are predators, the salmon are preyed upon throughout their journey to the ocean and back. This makes them vital conveyors of nutrients from the ocean to the forest. Mr. Kipping details some animals in the rainforest, as well as in the ocean, that utilize the salmon, from the various raptors to the smaller mammals and other birds that come to pick at their carcasses. In the ocean, there are salmon sharks, orcas, porpoise, dolphins, and sea lions. Perhaps the most charismatic predator of salmon are the brown and black bears. During his years spent in the rainforests of the Pacific Northwest, Mr. Kipping made and photographed voluminous observations of these animals, which he shared during his webinar. Bears are highly dependent on the oils from salmon and are the major consumers of the fish on their upstream migration. When salmon are not available, the bears will retreat into the woods and consume plants. Waterfalls are just some of the obstacles for the salmon. Brown bears, especially, are very aquatic and can spend extended periods in water awaiting salmon, sometimes creating eddies where salmon would attempt to rest, only to be eaten. The parts of the fish that are consumed are the head, skin, brain, cheek, and roe. Sperm tissue is rejected. Carcasses of salmon are carried by bear cubs up into the forest, facilitating recycling of nutrients.

Brown bear cubs get to spend three summers with their mother, after which she enters estrus and chases them off. But despite the very attentive mothers, many do not survive their first year. Black bear cubs spend two summers with their mother. For their safety from other males, they are sent to climb trees, using their large claws.

Mr. Kipping shares his extensive knowledge of Pacific Northwest rainforest ecology. He discusses nutrient cycling, especially of nitrogen. Plants like wild iris and skunk cabbage are among forest plants that receive nutrients from returning salmon. He describes the human historical and cultural associations with salmon, and also points out that, in our area, Pescadero and Butano Creeks have been restored for Coho salmon and steelhead.

The recording of his presentation is available through the Friends' website at:  
<https://friendsofsanpedrovalleypark.org/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-salmon-speaker-john-kipping/>

## A Happy Pi Day on the Trail!

by Joseph Piro

We had a newcomer for our March 14, 2026 Trail Day! Troy joined Mary Larsen, Irene Davies, Stan Jenson, my brother Erik and I for a good approximately mile-and-a-quarter hike up the Montara Mtn. Trail.



Along the way we worked on a bit more than 20 spots -- we raked leaves and twigs out of lots of drain dips and ditches, built a few new ones, trimmed branches and dug up a few "trip hazard" rocks and roots.

Happy trails and Happy Pi Day (3.14)!

## A Rainy Trail Day!

by Stan Jenson

Although the forecast was for more rain, three intrepid volunteers showed up on the second Saturday in April and covered just over two miles of trails!

Trail veteran Stan Jenson was joined by two new volunteers, Mike Byrne and Kasey Kitowski, both from Pacifica. Since the rangers weren't there to open the tool shed, the group used what Stan had brought: a McLeod, loppers, hedge shears, a pruning clipper and a folding saw.



We went up Brooks Creek Trail to the summit for a "group" selfie (at left) and cut down the vegetation around the chronic mud pond to make it easier for hikers to pass by. Along the way, the group cut back some low-hanging branches,

overhanging poison oak and filled in horse-hoof holes on the Montara Mountain Trail.

By the time we returned, the rain had stopped and there was even a trace of sunshine!

## ~ May / June '26 Calendar ~

Nature Walk w/JR Blair\*

Saturday, May 2 ..... 10 am

May Trail Day

Saturday, May 9 ..... 9 am

Coastal Condors - Zoom Webinar\*\*

Tuesday, May 12 ..... 7 pm

May Habitat Restoration Day

Saturday, May 16 ..... 10 am

June Trail Day

Saturday, June 13 ..... 9 am

Wild Things - Summer Program

Tuesday, June 16 ..... 11 am

June Habitat Restoration Day

Saturday, June 20 ..... 10 am

\* Eventbrite registration is required

\*\* Zoom webinar registration required

## >> FACTOID <<

### "The Blue Gum Boomerang"

An invasive, flammable, "beast," our common "California" eucalyptus; choking off food plants from our beasts. Not a happy scene, but in Australia things must be fine and dandy. There must be great things going on there with the native bacteria, fungi, and 6-legged plunderers like the euc bark beetle, feasting on layers of tangled leaves and twigs, disarming them from rudely smothering its native plants. In fact, the blue gum can be a real nuisance on its home turf; twigs and leaves are inaccessible to these consumers and scavengers, forming some great kindling for fire storms, doing their best to keep the "down under" country in the news.



Survivors of many fires, blue gums have a tough, "fiberglass shell" of bark to protect the tree; unless a fire reaches the heartwood, it will stand strong while nearby pines are eaten by flames. Blue gums also have protection from being eaten by something other than fire. Reason: the leaves are replete with FPC's which contain the precursors of cyanide, and tannins like terpenes, which wind their way around proteins, rendering them toxic to most consumers: "The nutritional treasures in these leaves are locked inside a dungeon, within a

(cont'd on page 5)

## Recent Class

### The Return of Birding 101

by Mila Stroganoff

The Cooper's Hawk webinar presented by Craig Nikitas at the very end of February led us straight into our first two-hour lecture on March 2nd, which focused on raptors. We had three more lectures and two Saturday field trips. The classes and field trips were led by J.R. Blair and organized by yours truly. We had a blast!

The class filled up quickly and people with different levels of birding knowledge attended. Everyone learned a lot and the feedback was very positive. We saw a great many species of birds, including a male and female Northern Harrier in mating mode. The weather also proved to be on our side during the field trips.

Cookies and chocolates and wonderful beverages were available during the breaks, and this helped to fuel our brain cells during the second half of the classes.

A great thanks to all of you who participated. Hope to see you out in the field birding and maybe even at the next Birding 101 Class.

Until next time...

---

## Plant Identification Walks

by Melanie Heisler

On Sunday, March 29, a group of ten hiked the Montara Mountain/Brooks Creek trail loop despite the heat. They were part of the Plant Walk, the first in what we hope will be a bi-monthly series of hikes to introduce people to the fun of plant identification. On these walks, we talk about how to identify the plants we see along the trail and take notice of what's in bloom. We stop along the way and talk about the plants we see. What is the plant name? What plant family does it belong to? What plant characteristics help tell you what it is? Each walk is limited to a small group of people. The only requirement is curiosity and the ability to hike the trail.



The species highlight of the day was seeing Leather Fern, *Polypodium scolieri*, on the Montara Mountain trail. We had recently seen this fern identified by David Nelson on his fern walk on San Bruno Mountain. Its deep green, leathery, and shiny pinnae, the leafy parts of the fern frond, caught our eye and helped distinguish it from the more prevalent California Polypody, *Polypodium californicum*. Checking iNaturalist, there have been several sightings at that location which confirmed our observation. This was a nice find and we will add this fern to the Plant List for the park.

The second hike was on Sunday, April 19. We walked the lower portion of the Hazelnut Trail with a very enthusiastic and engaged group. Everyone got a checklist of 50 plants that are commonly seen along this trail. And one by one we checked them off. It was especially nice to see Woolly Sunflower, *Eriophyllum lanatum*, coming into bud. But not hard to notice that Poison Oak, *Toxicodendron diversilobum*, is having a banner

year. Beware, it is everywhere.

The next two hikes will be on May 3 and May 17. Plus two more in June. Watch for announcements or find the Plant Walks listed under Events on the Friends website. You can sign up there using EventBrite.

---

## The Blue Gum Boomerang (continued from page 4)

labyrinth, protected by a fortress and booby trapped at every turn.” But the koala, with its innovative chemistry and huge, “clever” liver, can thoroughly digest the delicious younger leaves. Sounds like we’re stuck with a mess in the U.S. and even in Australia. But some of our scientists tried to protect our assaulted ecosystems from the despised litter by importing critters like the eucalyptus bark beetle: let’s attack tree: simple—kill the source. It worked, but all too well, as Southern California lost many a favorite shade tree. Since importing koalas is not an option, counties like Riverside get the boomerang.

Sources: 1) Danielle Clode, “Koala” - *A Natural history and an Uncertain Future*; 2) Center for Invasive Species Research at UC Riverside; 3) Timothy Paine on NPR broadcast; 4) BAY NATURE magazine, Oct. 18, 2016

## <<<< PARK NOTES >>>>

### A New Home for Nature's Night Shift - Scouts Install Bat House in SPVP

by Rui Pierre

On Saturday, March 28, 2026, a group of 13 Scouts from Scouting America (Burlingame Troops 156/4156) gathered along the Weiler Ranch Road Trail in San Pedro Valley Park to install a new bat house (near the 0.25 mile marker). Among them was 8th grader Rui Pierre.\* Together, the Scouts carried materials, set the pole and sign post, and carefully mounted the bat house, working as a team to create a safe habitat for one of the park's most important (and often misunderstood) residents.

**Why Bats Matter** - California is home to many bat species, such as *little brown bats* and *yuma myotis*. While they may not always get the best reputation, bats play a critical role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. A single bat can consume thousands of insects in one night, helping naturally control mosquito and pest populations. In that sense, bats are part of the park's quiet "night shift," working while most of us are asleep.

However, bats are facing increasing habitat loss. Old trees that once provided natural roosts are disappearing due to deforestation. As a result, safe places for bats to live are becoming harder to find. Bat houses are a simple, but effective, way to help fill that gap.

**Why Here?** - The installation site along the Weiler Ranch Road Trail was carefully chosen based on bats' primary needs.

- **Proximity to water:** Creeks attract insects, providing a reliable food source.
- **Sun exposure:** Bat houses need warmth to create suitable roosting conditions.
- **Open flight paths:** Easy access for bats to come and go — bat houses are typically mounted at least 12 feet high, giving bats enough space to drop into flight and helping protect them from ground predators.

This combination makes the area selected for the installation especially attractive to bats looking for a new home.

**What to Look For** - Bats typically begin settling into new roosts in spring when they form maternity colonies and raise their young. Activity peaks in the summer and early fall, when insect populations are highest. If you visit the park around dusk, take a moment to look up near the creek. You might spot small, quick silhouettes darting through the evening sky. That said, patience is key. Bat houses are not always occupied right away and it can take a year or more for bats to discover and adopt a new roost.

**A Hidden Detail** - San Pedro Valley Park already hosts two bat houses installed on the SMCo Parks maintenance facilities, though they are not easily visible from the trail. With this new installation, the park continues to expand safe habitat for bats across the landscape. Projects like this may seem small, but they have a meaningful impact. By supporting wildlife habitat, our community helps sustain the delicate balance of the local ecosystem.

**\*Editor's Note:** Rui Pierre is a talented, dedicated and hard-working young man who planned and installed this bat house as his Eagle Scout Service Project. He made a brief presentation to describe his project to the Friends at our Annual Members Meeting and BBQ last September (see photo at left). Rui worked with SMCo Parks Volunteer Coordinator, Stuart Smith, to locate and install the bat house and the accompanying information sign in SPVP. We did not assist Rui with the selection and installation of his bat house, but wanted to give him this space to let him tell us about his project and the need for bat houses.

Thank you, Rui! We wish you success in monitoring and maintaining this new roost for the bats of SPVP going forward. We hope they like it!



Scouts busy at work installing the bat house pole and sign post



Rui with Stuart Smith after installation



Rui at Members BBQ in September

# An Eco Fest Celebration for Earth Day

by Sharron Walker

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park once again joined the San Mateo County Parks Foundation in their booth at the Pacific Beach Coalition's Eco Fest at Linda Mar State Beach on Saturday, April 18th to celebrate Earth Day! Mark Golembiewski, Shane Kadlecik, Melanie Heisler and I were there to represent the Friends. The Eco Fest was well represented by local civic and environmental groups, with a variety of activities to support the Festival. There were over 30 organizations represented! And, of course, the beach cleanups took place before the Eco Fest began at 10:30 am.

The PBC's honoree for 2026 is the Steelhead Trout -- a long-time resident of San Pedro Valley Creek and San Pedro Valley Park! This year's theme is "Clean it out, for Steelhead Trout!"

At the Eco Fest, we had an activity in which folks first guessed



Melanie with young game player

how many eggs the steelhead female would initially lay, and then guess how many of those eggs would typically survive through each of the stages of life: becoming fry, then spawners, then sea-going adults, and eventually how many surviving adults would return to spawn in our creek. Most of those who played the "game" were quite surprised to learn that it takes at least 2,500 steelhead eggs to produce just two adults who are able to return to their San Pedro Creek spawning grounds! It was a fun, engaging and educational activity!

We had information about San Pedro Valley Park available for visitors who stopped at our shared Eco Fest booth, as well as about various Friends volunteer opportunities, including Visitor Center hosting, habitat restoration and trail maintenance days, the new Plant Guide, our Photo Contest, and all of the upcoming programs and hikes. It was great to tell people all about our wonderful park and Friends activities on a beautiful, sunny day at the beach in celebration of Earth Day!



Foundation Exec. Director Michele Beasley with Mark, Shane and Sharron



Mark telling a family about SPVP

## Saving the Rein Orchids by Bing Huey

On Wednesday morning, 15 April, Margaret Goodale came to the park to reprise her project to protect a few rein orchids along the Montara Mountain Trail. Like last year, she again got permission to cordon off a segment of trail-side where several plants have begun producing their basal leaves. The understanding is that the marked off area would not be cleared by the brush removal crew, but be selectively hand weeded and pruned by Margaret and other volunteers.



Last year, the process resulted in the blooms in Summer of a number of orchid plants, as well as a variety of other natives.



Two of us met Margaret at the park (we were joined by Melanie Heisler this time) and we repeated the marking and weeding procedure.

## On The Nature Journaling Trail

by Sharron Walker

The Edgewood/Huddart/Wunderlich Parks Nature Journalers joined the San Pedro Valley Park Nature Journalers in March at our gathering in SPVP to have a combined meeting of both our groups. It is great that San Mateo County Parks now has two nature journaling groups within the park system. Beth Harrison (NJ group leader), Nancy Ridgeway, and Barb Erny joined us.



Beth Harrison and team

We once again toured the NJ Tree Plaques.



March gathering of both NJ groups at SPVP

We also explored “Patterns in Nature,” our March - April prompt.

Nature is full of many patterns. But when I did some in-depth research, I discovered so much more. Two examples:

**Tree Branches** – exhibit a **fractal pattern**. Fractal patterns in nature are complex, self-similar structures that repeat the same shape at different scales, appearing in branching systems. For example, a tree branch splits, and then those branches split, repeating the process. This branching, fractal structure maximizes efficiency for collecting resources like sunlight and water, with each segment looking like a smaller version of the entire tree. Leaves demonstrate fractal patterns as well.

**Redwood & pine needles**, along with their associated branches and cones, primarily form **spiral and Fibonacci patterns** in nature.

So, become curious and check out patterns in nature. That practice is a component of nature journaling: becoming curious, investigating and sharing with others. As nature journalers, that is what we do!

The San Mateo County Parks Foundation is also promoting nature journaling. Melanie Heisler and I attended a Nature Journaling workshop at Edgewood Park on April 10. The presenter was Sami Chan (*see photo at right*). Sami created the SMCP Foundation’s poster for the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve last year and is now giving nature journaling workshops for the Foundation. The next one is in May at San Bruno Mountain Park; to register, go to [supportparks.org](http://supportparks.org)



SPVP Nature Journalers info: [spvpnaturejournalers@gmail.com](mailto:spvpnaturejournalers@gmail.com)

**A Nice Surprise Amid the Flora** by Bing Huey



Bobcat  
taken on 03/20/2026  
in Walnut Grove Picnic Area



Unidentified Wasp on Star Lily  
(Toxicoscordion)



Purple Needlegrass  
taken on 03/26/2026  
along the Valley View Trail

**A Close Look at Plant Life and Friends at SPVP** by Bing Huey



Bee Fly and Gilia  
taken on 03/26/2026  
along the Valley View Trail



Wood Mint (Stachys) - White variant  
taken on 04/15/2026  
along the Hazelnut Trail



Green Hairstreak  
taken on 03/26/2026  
along the Valley View Trail



Echo Azure on Cow Parsnip  
taken on 04/15/2026  
along the Montara Mountain Trail