



Valley Views

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park

September / October 2026

Upcoming Program

Editor's Note: There is no educational program (Zoom webinar) scheduled for September. Our monthly series of Zoom webinars or in-person lectures will resume in October.

An October Zoom Webinar with J.R. Blair

"A Glimpse of Ecuador: the Galápagos Islands, the Andean Cloud Forest, and Quito"

Join J.R. Blair on **October 17, 2026 at 7 pm** for a travelogue about his remarkable trip to Ecuador. In January of this year, he visited several of the Galápagos Islands, Quito, and nearby cloud forest areas. J.R. will present photos and videos with commentary about his trip. See his encounters with Darwin's finches, several species of seabirds, sea lions, tortoises, marine iguanas, not to mention various reef fish, rays, sharks, sea turtles and other wildlife on and around these other-worldly volcanic islands. He will also share photographs of his brief time in the third highest capital city in the world, Quito, a thriving city with both colonial and modern architecture enhanced by a contemporary mural scene. He will top off the talk with photos of some amazingly beautiful hummingbirds, tanagers, toucans and other cloud forest bird species. Please join J.R. and learn about this little slice of this iconic part of the world.

About the speaker: J.R. Blair has been interested in nature since he was a kid. This interest was facilitated by his experiences as a Boy Scout and a counselor at an outdoor education program as a teenager. For several years, he was employed as a naturalist for various outdoor education programs. Ultimately, he received his bachelor's degree at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. In 1999, he obtained his master's degree at San Francisco State University studying with the accomplished mycologist, Dr. Dennis Desjardin. His thesis was Fungi Associated with *Arctostaphylos* in Northern California. Since that time, he has been an active member of the Mycological Society of San Francisco and the San Mateo County Bird Alliance. Following being awarded his M.A., he was hired as a lecturer of biology at SFSU for 21 years until his retirement in 2020. He was the director of the Sierra Nevada Field Campus for a dozen years. Currently he is happily retired and volunteers for various nature- and education-oriented organizations.



Please scan the QR code at right or use the link below to register in advance for this webinar:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/3017878656958/WN_ryPv2E9eRCuHZM-irlDEOA

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.



Upcoming Nature Walk

A Nature Walk in San Pedro Valley Park

Saturday, September 26th, 2026

Time: 10 am – 12 pm

This is our Fall Nature Walk and the second one of the year. Register for a 2-hour nature stroll with J.R. Blair on Saturday, September 26th at 10 am. This walk is for nature enthusiasts ages 12 years and older and is limited to 15 people. We'll get started as soon as everyone has gathered, so please be on time. Remember to bring water and other personal needs. In terms of weather -- heavy rain cancels.

Please scan the QR code at right or use the Eventbrite link below to sign up for this event:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1999048326357?aff=oddtcreator>



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 also open during those hours.

Recent Summer Program

An On-site Lecture About Bats by Corky Quirk

"Bats — Live!"

by Paula Martin

On July 7th, 2026, Corky Quirk, founder of NorCalBats (Northern California Bats) gave a most informative and an entertaining presentation about bats at the San Pedro Valley Park Visitor Center. There were forty-four attendees of all ages.

"NorCalBats is dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of bats throughout Northern California. They also are committed to public education regarding the environmental benefits of bats, and dispelling fears and myths that lead to the death of roosts and colonies. Located in the Sacramento Valley, trained volunteers care for injured and orphaned bats throughout the valley and surrounding foothills." NorCalBats was founded twenty years ago by Corky Quirk.

Corky gave us various interesting facts about bats. Bats are winged mammals. They give birth to their young alive and nurse the pups for five weeks until they are mature enough to find food on their own. There are various species of bats, seventeen in northern California and twenty-six in all in California.

She brought three species of live bats. These included the Big Brown Bat, the Pallid Bat, and the California Myotis, the smallest bat. The Pallid Bat has very large ears and is the newest California state animal. She took the bats out of small bat boxes with her hands and magnified a view of them to show their wings, teeth, ears, tails and a close-up view of one eating a worm. They can have a ferocious appetite and eat fifty to one hundred or more moth eggs, worms or insects in a day.

We need to protect bat populations. They have declined dramatically. Pesticides in plants are harmful, as are natural predators, such as skunks, foxes, large birds, feral cats and domestic dogs. There has also been a decline in insect populations, a major source of food for bats. Artificial lights are a distraction to their flights at night and should be turned off, if not necessary.

If you find a bat on the ground, it may not necessarily be in trouble. It is best to take a photo and contact NorCalBats (see their Emergency Bat Rescue page on their website). Do not pick up a bat with your hands, as they could bite. About one in ten bats on the ground may be sick with rabies.

Remember norcalbats.org for emergency bat rescue, bat facts, resources, lectures (virtual or in person) and events, or to volunteer your time. They also have a bat blog and newsletter. You can donate to their efforts and organization at NorCalBats, P.O. Box 933, Davis, CA 95617-0933. Phone: (530) 902-1918. They are not yet a registered non-profit organization and rely only on lecture fees and donations from individuals. They also have an Amazon wish list.



Recent Summer Program

Native Bird Connections by Paula Martin

On July 28, 2026, Jenny Papka, Director of the nonprofit organization Native Bird Connections, gave a presentation with three live raptors at the Visitor Center in San Pedro Valley Park. Forty-five attendees of all ages were present. Native Bird Connections gives educational programs and professional consulting regarding the protection, rescue and awareness of native birds in our environment. As someone who cares deeply about her animal ambassadors, she stressed respect, responsibility and reverence for raptors.

Jenny has several aviaries at her residence and raises or takes in injured raptors. She brought with her a live Swainson Hawk, a Barn Owl and a non-native Eurasian Eagle Owl. She also had several bird specimens displayed, like a Red-Tailed Hawk wing, Barn Owl wing, owl skulls and more, that the group got to see close up or touch.



The Swainson Hawk she showed the audience was rescued as it had a fracture on its left wing. It is a North American species and lives in the Central Valley and throughout the United States. They often “follow the farmer’s plow” looking for rodents in farm fields. It is the longest migrating hawk

The second live raptor was a Barn Owl. This bird also had a broken injured left wing and was rescued. The Barn Owl roosts and nests in cavities in houses, farm buildings, cliffs or tree holes. They are deeply nocturnal. They have acute hearing and can identify prey by sight or sound. Barn Owls can be useful to farmers as they eat many rodents.



The third raptor Jenny brought with her was a non-native Eurasian Eagle Owl, a large and very vocal owl that entertained the audience with many hoots. This is the largest of the owl species. Jenny presented many owl facts. There are many different owls in California. The Spotted and Burrowing Owl are now somewhat endangered. The Pigmy Owl and the Elf Owl are the smallest.

In the wild, owls can live five to eight years and up to twenty years or more in captivity depending on their size and species. There are many perils for raptors in migration or nesting. Predators may include raccoons, foxes or larger raptors.

Jenny Papka answered many questions throughout her lively presentation. The visiting raptors seemed to be

curious and looked around at the audience and our specimens in the Visitor Center. It was an engaging, informative and entertaining presentation.

Jenny brought several informative brochures to hand out after her talk, on the topics of the hazards of pesticides, how to put up a Kestrel or Barn Owl box, and what to do if you find a baby bird, nestling, injured or sick bird. You are encouraged to call Native Bird Connections for help at (925) 963-9753 or email www.nativebirds.org, if needed.

Amazing Group Shows Up to Work on the Hazelnut Trail!

by Joseph Piro

We had an absolutely great turn-out for our July 11, 2026 Trail Day! I think I got everyone -- Mary Larsen, Stan Jensen, Mike Byrnes, Jim, Will, Kasey (not in the photo), Petra, Megan, Jackelyn, Irene Lee, Jane, Xenia, my brother Erik and me.



We returned to the east end of the Hazelnut Trail and continued with some work we did last month -- fixing a few split, high-low sections of trail -- and also scraping out a few drain dips and trimming some overhanging vegetation. Enjoy the trails!

Cutting Back Vegetation on the Old Trout Farm Trail

by Joseph Piro

New-comers Emma and Mac joined Mary Larsen, Mike Byrnes, Will Hinds, Jim, Casey, my brother Erik and me for our August 8, 2026 Trail Day.



Under an overcast sky we headed up the Old Trout Farm Trail and ultimately up to the bridge on the Brooks Falls Trail.

We did the

majority of our work in the woods around the old foundation, cutting back overgrown ivy to widen the trail leading up to the old stairs, cutting back low-hanging vegetation and working on a small slide just past the footbridge -- spreading out the rocky soil that landed below and building a small impromptu retaining wall above with nearby logs, branches and rocks to shore up the outside edge.

Enjoy the trails!

~ September / October '26 Calendar ~

September Trail Day

Saturday, Sept. 12 9 am

Sept. Habitat Restoration Day

Saturday, Sept. 19 9 am

Members Meeting & BBQ

Sunday, Sept. 20 Noon

Nature Walk w/J.R. Blair

Saturday, Sept. 26 10 am

October Trail Day

Saturday, Oct. 10 10 am

Plant ID Walk on Hazelnut*

Saturday, Oct. 10 10 am

October Habitat Restoration Day

Saturday, Oct. 17 10 am

J.R. Blair - Ecuador **

Saturday, Oct. 17 7 pm

* Eventbrite registration is required

** Zoom registration is required

>>> The People's Choice Award <<<

We are very pleased to announce that the photograph "Ancient Shady Path" by Ron Wilson was voted as the winner of this years' "People's Choice Award" in the Friends' 2026 Photo Contest. Congratulations Ron!

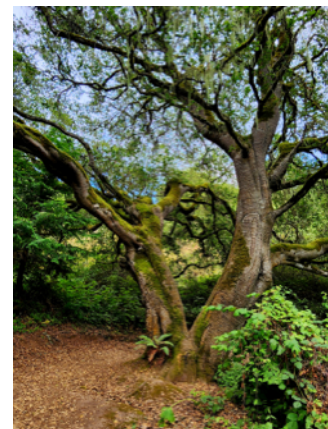
Ron's image of one of the old, majestic live oak trees near the start of the Hazelnut Trail was chosen as best image overall by SPVP visitors who viewed the winning photos that had been on display in the Visitor Center from late May through late July. His photo had previously been awarded second place in the Trails & Landscapes category by the contest judges.

Ron, a long time member of the Friends, will be acknowledged and receive a certificate of award from the Friends at our Members Meeting and BBQ at the Visitor Center on September 20th. Join us in congratulating him there.

Trails & Landscapes

"Ancient Shady Path"

by Ron Wilson



We Need Volunteers to Fill Our Open Board Positions!!

We currently have three open positions on our Board of Directors that we need to fill as soon as possible. These roles are critical to the daily operations of the Friends of San Pedro Valley Park and to furthering our mission of educating members and the public about our park and the natural world in which we live.

The duties of our **Membership Coordinator** include: Maintaining up-to-date membership information in an electronic database; Preparing regular membership reports to the Board at monthly meetings; Managing membership applications; Managing dues payments received by check, cash and credit card; Generating membership renewal notices and issuing membership cards; Planning and coordinating membership events and activities; and Helping gain and retain new members.

Our **Programs Director** is responsible for designing, arranging, scheduling, producing and hosting our monthly educational talks and occasional field trips for FoSPVP members and the general public, both virtually (webinars) and in person, that support our greater mission; Overseeing the execution of in-person and online programs, ensuring they are carried out effectively and efficiently; Developing and managing program budgets; Forwarding event descriptions, speaker biographies and photos to the Promotion/Outreach Director and the Newsletter Editor for distribution of program announcements via flyers and posting on social media sites, as well as in the Friends newsletter; and Working with members and other stakeholders to identify necessary programs and services.

In addition, we have a **Vice President** position on the Board that is open. The Vice President assists the President and other Board members as requested, Serves as the 'back-up' to the President when the President is unavailable due to illness, injury, etc.; Assists with preparing the Board meeting agendas; Determines the total number of volunteer hours expended by FoSPVP personnel on a quarterly basis and submits a report to the SMCOUNTY Parks Volunteer Coordinator; and Manages other tasks and projects as needed.

If you are interested in serving in any of these important roles on our Board of Directors and want to make a positive impact in your community by supporting environmental education and conservation, please contact: volunteer@fspvp.org. We would love to speak with you!

New Interactive Touch Screen Display in the Visitor Center

A new, large, interactive touch screen display has been installed in the Visitor Center to allow visitors to access the new SPVP Plant Guide that was recently developed from "scratch" by the Friends of SPVP under the direction of team leaders Melanie Heisler and Shane Kadlecik. The touch screen was provided by the Interpretive Planning group in the SM County Parks Dept. (led by Katherine Wright), who were also responsible for installing the software and constructing the custom wooden display stand. We thank Katherine and her team(s) for their great work and generosity!

The new Plant Guide had been installed on the Friends' website for just a few weeks, but now visitors can learn a tremendous amount of information about each of the plants found in the park by touching the screen and working through the available Plant Guide menus (*see photos below*). Plants are divided into the categories of Ferns, Grasses, Herbs, Shrubs, Trees and Vines. Multiple photos and extensive data are provided for each plant. The touch screen menus also provide access to information on the animals and fungi that can be found in the park, along with the five types of habitats that comprise SPVP. Finally, some historical information on the prior inhabitants of the park land is provided, specifically regarding the Ramaytush, the Spanish Era, the Mexican Era, and the old Trout Farm. There is even a "Park History" button that provides a explanation of how San Pedro Valley Park came to be, beginning with a search for water in the 1950's.

Come and see for yourself! The new touch screen display is fabulous!!



~~~ Friends of SPVP Annual Members Meeting and Barbecue ~~~

The Friends of San Pedro Valley Park will hold our 2026 Membership Meeting on **Sunday, September 20th at Noon**, followed by our traditional fall **Barbecue** on the patio at the Visitor Center. Please mark your calendars. The attendance of our members at this important annual event is highly encouraged. This is the only all-members “business” meeting we hold each year and the one opportunity for our members to gather and provide public feedback to the Board of Directors on the direction of our organization. We look forward to seeing all of our Friends at this special event.

For the BBQ, please let us know if you will be joining us and if you will be bringing a side dish or a desert for all to share. As usual, hamburgers (and some veggie burgers), hot dogs, and drinks will be provided by the Friends, and Joseph Piro will serve (as he always graciously does) as our Master Grill Chef. **Please RSVP** and direct any food and drink-related questions to **Susan Kern: skkern865@gmail.com**.

The Annual Election for the Board of Directors will be held during the members meeting. This year’s nominating committee has selected the following officer candidates, but others may be nominated from the floor (and must be seconded to stand for election): **President:** Mark Golembiewski; **Secretary:** Carl Schwab; and **Treasurer:** Susan Kern. The **Vice-President** position remains open. If you would like to throw your name in the ring, please reach out to Mark prior to the Members Meeting.

Other Directors and Members-at-Large on the Board will be elected from the following slate of nominees: Raquel Iverson, Melinda Moses, Shane Kadlecik, Istvan Puski, Sharron Walker and Bing Huey.

Plant Identification Walks Update

by Melanie Heisler

We have done 8 plant walks this year. These bi-monthly walks have now covered every trail in the Park at least once. On July 12, we hiked the Montara Mountain Trail and found the Leather Fern (*Polypodium scolieri*) and the patch of Coast Piperia (*Plantanthera elegans ssp. elegans*). The orchid spikes were just starting to show the white coloration of the flowers to come. Flowers were fully open by August. The orchid patch is easy to find at about the 0.25 mile mark.



Coast piperia
(photo by Sharron Walker)

On July 26, we hiked part of the Hazelnut Trail with a small, but enthusiastic, group. The trail was dry and dusty, and the trail-side plants had been weed-whacked by the rangers, so there were not many flowers to see along the way. We did enjoy seeing great examples of Giant Chinquapin (*Chrysopsis chrysophylla*) including some with fruit starting to form. No spines are evident on the orange orbs when the fruit is young.

We have one more walk planned for this year. In honor of Spanish Heritage Month, we are excited to offer a bi-lingual plant walk in Spanish and English on Saturday, October 10, 2026. The walk will take place from 10 am to noon.



Leather fern



Giant Chinquapin

Najwa Baddagh from the Interpretive Division of San Mateo County Parks will provide the Spanish commentary. We will provide plant checklists in both Spanish and English for the walk. Únete a nosotros! Come join us!

You can sign up for this walk by going to the ‘Events’ section on our website at fspvp.org.

After the October 10th walk, we will take a break, with no more plant walks until the rains return and we get some moisture and fresh new growth.

On the Nature Journaling Trail

by Sharron Walker

We did it!! We celebrated 5 years at our July 23rd gathering of the San Pedro Valley Nature Journalers!!

Some of our original members from the first Nature Journaling workshop I gave at the Sanchez Art Center (SAC) attended. Thanks to Cindy Abbott, ED, who supported Nature Journaling workshops. I gave four workshops that led to our NJ group at SPVP! Journaling is a movement. Wild Wonder, formed by John Muir Laws, is now a Foundation and our group is listed with them.

I thought it might be of interest to ask those in attendance in July, why they nature journal. Here are a few of the responses:

Vivian Walz: “I nature journal to engage more deeply with nature. It is often a spiritual experience for me, and always makes me slow down, and feel grateful I am part of this community because we are accountable but not judgmental, we inspire each other and we not only share our journals but our joy!”

Wendy Snyder: “Keeps me curious; Grounds me; Recharges me; Educates me; Heals me; Challenges me.”

Lisa Warns: “Stress relief! And I enjoy the time in nature, working slowly with colors, paints, pens and pencils, trying to replicate a small part of the outdoors.”

Melanie Heisler: “Nature Journaling opens a window – a way to see things. Nature Journaling also opens a door – new places to go.”



SPVP Nature Journalers - 5th Anniversary Gathering



Book/Journal Raffle - Ron Maykel,
Paula Martin, Wendy Snyder

Kris Matinovich: “Other than sitting in meditation, nature journaling invites me to slow down, or stop, usually outside, but sometimes from my kitchen window, and find stillness. From there, I begin to notice things – a plant, tree, bird, or animal, colors like the intense color of wildflowers or the soft gray-green of a foliose lichen, or maybe the other senses are awakened, the feel of a breeze across my face or the scent of a pine tree on a warm summer day or (my favorite) the smell and taste of salt-tinged air on the coast.”

Our final activity was a raffle of Nature Journaling and art books and journals (thanks to Vivian!).

After our gathering, we hiked to view the Rein Orchids (Coast piperia) along the Montara Mountain Trail. Margaret Goodall joined us. She is a dedicated advocate for orchids and for their being marked on the trail. If you have not seen them, I suggest you do so; they bloom in August!

For more info about SPVP Nature Journalers:
spvpnaturejournalers@gmail.com



Rein Orchid walk on Montara Mtn Trail with Margaret Goodall

Looking Into the Insect World at SPVP by Bing Huey



Green Leaf Beetle (*Trirhabda*) on Yerba Santa
taken along the Brooks Creek Trail on 07-27-2026



Satyr Comma
taken along the Trout Farm Trail
on 08-01-2026

Funereal Duskywing on Rosilla
taken along the Valley View Trail
on 06-19-2026



More of the Insect World at SPVP by Bing Huey



Ithuriel's Spear
taken along the Valley View Trail on 05-25-2026



Wasp (maybe *Braconidae*) on paintbrush
taken along the Hazelnut Trail on 07-18-2025

Beetle larva on cream bush leaf
taken along the Hazelnut Trail
on 06-17-2025



Plant Bug (*Prepops*)
taken along the Brooks Creek Trail
on 07-27-2026