



MAGPIE CALLS

Newsletter of the Santa Ynez Valley Natural History Society
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*Dedicated to the study, exploration, and appreciation of natural history
in the Santa Ynez Valley region.*

A Message from the SYVNHS board of directors...

Year-end Appeal Successful

Our year-end appeal for donations was very successful. The board of directors would like to thank all the members who responded. We appreciate your generosity and your vote of confidence in the future of the Society.

Special Thanks to Two Board Members

Most of our members know that the Society is almost entirely run by volunteers. Two of these dedicated volunteers are board members Marjorie Lakin Erickson and Charles Stauffer. Both of these individuals will be stepping down in 2016 after long terms on the Society's board of directors, and we wanted to extend our gratitude to them for this service.

Marge was a founding member of the Society, and as an attorney she generously gave her time to help us prepare and submit our Articles of Incorporation and application to become a nonprofit corporation. She was on the board for our first six years, took a one-year hiatus and then returned to serve for another eight years! She was our board President for three years. Marge is an avid birder, animal tracker, and dedicated Sedgwick docent who shares her natural history knowledge on the many field trips she attends. Next time you see her on the trail, please thank her.

Upcoming SYVNHS Lectures and Field Trips

- Jan. 20 Rock Creek Wildflowers (lecture)
- Feb. 20 Planting Native Oaks (workshop)
- Feb. 27 Why are there so many Manzanitas? (lecture)
- Mar. 12 Coreopsis Hill and the Guadalupe Dunes (field)
- Mar. 20 Local Spring Wildflower Foray (field)
- Apr. 9 Carrizo Plain Wildflowers (field)
- Apr. 23 Poetry with Paul Willis (event)
- May 1 Blooms and Birds of Burton Mesa (field)
- July TBA Vandenberg Flora and Rock Art (field)

Charlie has been on the board for eight years and served as our President during the past three eventful years. He applied his skills in business management and communication to many tasks, including guiding the entire board and other stakeholders through a review of our organization's mission and goals in 2014. Along with several other board members, he helped revamp our website and improve outreach to members in 2015. Charlie has been particularly supportive of programs that address topics at the intersection of natural history and community politics, such as water management or wildlife protection. Be sure to thank him when you see him at a lecture or during a field trip.

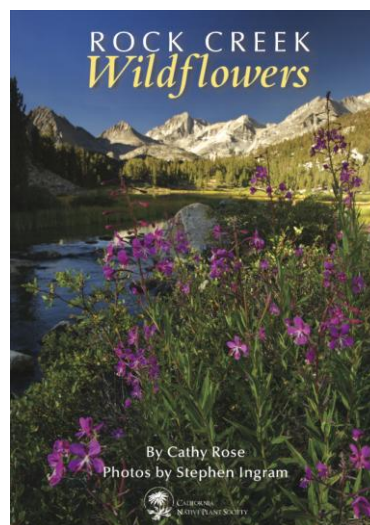
Upcoming Lectures and Field Trips

Rock Creek Wildflowers

Free Lecture with Cathy Rose and Stephen Ingram
Wednesday, January 20, 7:00 p.m.
Wildling Museum, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang

Author Cathy Rose and photographer Stephen Ingram will present a talk featuring their new book, *Rock Creek Wildflowers*, published by the California Native Plant Society. Cathy will discuss the alpine and subalpine flora native to the eastern Sierra, illuminated with Stephen's stunning photographs. After the talk, you'll have an opportunity to pick up a signed copy of this compact guide

(Continued next page)



which includes rich plant descriptions, name derivations, and stories of the botanists who discovered and described the plants. Many of the genera discussed in the book are found in Santa Barbara County as well.

Cathy Rose, whose botanical studies began in the 1960s in Yosemite with Carl Sharsmith, has led field trips in the deserts, coasts, and mountains of California and, for 15 summers, botanical walks in the Tuolumne–Tioga Pass area for the National Park Service. **Stephen Ingram**, a widely published photographer, is past president of the Bristlecone chapter of CNPS, and the author and photographer of *Cacti, Agaves, and Yuccas of California and Nevada*.

A book signing and reception will follow the free lecture, with time to enjoy the Wildling's current exhibits: *Legacy and Loss: Landscapes of the Santa Barbara Region*, and *Prints from Land and Sea: A Blend of Art and Science*.



Stephen Ingram and Cathy Rose

Planting Native Oaks

Free Workshop with John Everts and Sedgwick Docents

Saturday, February 20, 10:00 a.m. to noon

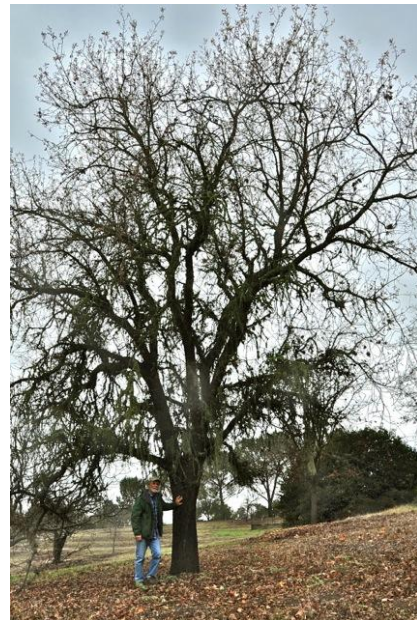
UC Sedgwick Reserve, 3566 Brinkerhoff Avenue, Santa Ynez

Participation is limited to 30

Advance registration required at synature@west.net 693-5683

What outdoor activity is fun, and in future years will help beautify any landscape, support wildlife, and combat global warming? Planting a native oak tree!! If you have ever wondered about the proper techniques for growing, planting, and protecting an oak, this hands-on workshop is for you.

Participants will receive instructions and advice on how to plant seedlings, acorns, and – importantly – the key steps needed to make sure a seedling will grow into a healthy sapling and mature tree. As a bonus, every participant in this class will receive their own Sedgwick Nursery-grown valley oak to take home to plant! For those who are interested, a short walk to identify the three tree species of native oaks at Sedgwick will follow the tree planting.



A valley oak, planted from a seedling 30 years ago. It was never given any supplemental water after the first year. Photos by John Everts.

The workshop will be coordinated by **John Everts**, editor of the book *Oaks of California*. Working closely with him will be several of the reserve's docents who have been leading the Sedgwick Oak Restoration project, which began in 2013. **Marjorie Popper**, a Sedgwick docent and co-author of *Oaks of California*, will lead the oak tree identification walk.

[Annual Election of Society Board Members will take place at 6:45 p.m. immediately before Tom Parker's lecture.]

Why are there so many Manzanitas?

An Ecology and Evolution Journey

Free Lecture and Book-Signing with Tom Parker

Co-sponsored by Solvang Library

Saturday, February 27, 7:00 p.m.

Santa Ynez Valley Grange #644,

2374 Alamo Pintado Ave, Los Olivos, CA

The California Floristic Province (CFP) is the center of diversity for manzanitas (*Arctostaphylos* species, *Ericaceae*). The CFP contains 104 of the 105 taxa known worldwide. Manzanitas are the "rock stars" of woody plant diversity in California. Ranging from the Sierra Nevada mountains to coastal bluffs along the Pacific, from temperate rainforests along the North Pacific Coast to arid mountain slopes in Southern California, a wealth of manzanita species and subspecies grow in an astonishing array of environments. This presentation will introduce the diversity and evolutionary context, then focus on a few ecological processes that contribute to the evolution of this group, especially animal dispersal mutualisms and response to wildfires. Important characters to aid in keying this beautiful group will be highlighted.



Tom Parker is Professor of Biology at San Francisco State University where he's been employed as an ecologist since 1980. He investigates community and evolutionary ecology focused on the dynamics of plant communities: chaparral seed banks, tidal wetland dynamics, seed dispersal of tropical trees, mycorrhizal ecology of forests and chaparral, and evolution of *Arbutioideae* and *Arctostaphylos*. He was the lead author for the treatment of *Arctostaphylos* in the *Flora of North America* and the 2nd edition of *The Jepson Manual*. He is a co-author of *Field Guide to Manzanitas: California, North America, and Mexico*, Backcountry Press, 2015. He will have some copies for signing and sale.

Coreopsis Hill and the Guadalupe Dunes

Field trip with Larry Ballard

Saturday, March 12, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Participation is limited to 25

Advance registration required at synature@west.net or

693-5683

Members free/nonmembers \$20

The Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge lies within the largest coastal dune system in California. The hike takes us through dune scrub, a shrub-dominated habitat that includes dune specialist plants along with a number of rare plant species. After a foggy or windy night we'll see an abundance of mammal, bird and insect tracks. It's a relatively short hike to Coreopsis Hill with little elevation gain, however it is in loose sand. We will meander along the way, examining spring flowers, insects, and animal sign.

A special use permit granted from the NWR allows us access through the gated entrance at Beigle Rd. along Oso Flaco Lake Road. There are facilities at the parking lot at Oso Flaco Lake about a half mile away. The hike will last from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., so bring a lunch, water, and hat. Dress in layers as weather is changeable and dune winds can be boisterous.



Giant Coreopsis, photo © Neal Kramer

Larry Ballard has an interest in all aspects of the region's natural history and has led many natural history trips for our organization as well as for other groups and institutions in Santa Barbara County.

Local Spring Wildflower Foray

Field trip with Liz Gaspar

Sunday, March 20, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Participation is limited to 20

Advance registration required at synature@west.net or 693-5683

Members free/nonmembers \$20

As we go to press, the rains have just begun in earnest, and we can't predict where the best wildflowers will be in late March. It may be along Manzana Creek, where the canyon sides could be spangled with shooting stars, woodland stars, gilia, and larkspur. Or we may find the richest trove on Figueroa Mountain or on the trail to Chert Butte. Liz Gaspar will lead us there and illuminate the always-surprising, amazingly diverse burst of spring bloom in the Santa Ynez Valley.

Bring a hat, sun protection, water, sack lunch, and good sturdy shoes, such as hiking boots. Trip hiking poles are recommended as some sections of the trail may be moderately steep.



California Clearwing Moth (*Hemaris thetis*) on Umbrella Larkspur (*Delphinium umbraculorum*) wildflower, photo by Marc Kummel

Liz Gaspar was the park naturalist at Cachuma Lake for many years. She is co-author of *Wildflowers and Other Plants of the Cachuma Lake Area*, Santa Barbara County, published fall 2015. She earned her master's degree in Plant Ecology from UCSB, where she studied native grasses.

Epic Wildflower Adventure – Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties

Field trip with Sally Isaacson

Saturday, April 9, 9:00 a.m. to almost dark

Participation is limited to 25

Advance registration required at synature@west.net or 693-5683

Members free/nonmembers \$20

Depending on bloom and road conditions, this field trip may cover all or part of the following route, making multiple stops to view wildflower displays. We will meet at Pappys' Restaurant on Betteravia Road in Santa Maria at 9:00 a.m. sharp.

We will then travel on Highway 166 to Cottonwood Canyon in the Cuyama Valley, and continue on to Carrizo. We will cross the Carrizo Plain on Soda Lake Road (about 45 miles, mainly dirt road), and then travel on Highway 58 to Shell Creek. We will drive to Highway 101 near San Luis Obispo. At this point, participants will be free to travel home on their own. Dress in layers, bring lunch and water, be sure to have a full tank of fuel, and prepare for a long day. High clearance vehicles are best for this trip.



Carrizo Plain in spring, photo by John Evarts

Sally Isaacson is a botanist who worked at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden for twenty years, in later years as Director of Education. She is currently Volunteer/Education Coordinator for the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County at Arroyo Hondo Preserve, Gaviota, where she manages the docent and general volunteer programs, works with school and college groups, and leads special tours. Sally is also a cattle rancher and an avid nature photographer.

Poetry in Celebration of Earth Day

Free evening event with Paul Willis
 Saturday, April 23, 7:00 p.m.
 Tipton Meeting House
 UC Sedgwick Reserve
 3566 Brinkerhoff Avenue, Santa Ynez

The Santa Ynez Valley Natural History Society and UC Sedgwick Reserve are pleased to host a poetry reading in honor of Earth Day with former Poet Laureate of Santa Barbara Paul Willis. The human relationship to the natural world and wild places is a major theme in much of the writing by Professor Willis, and in this special evening program he will share a selection from his extensive body of work. Prior to the reading, the gates of the Reserve will open at 5:00 p.m. for those who would like arrive early to enjoy a picnic supper under the oaks.

Paul Willis is a professor of English at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, where he has taught creative writing and British Renaissance literature for the last 28 years. He grew up in Oregon, attended Wheaton College in Illinois, worked as a mountain guide in the Cascades and Sierra Nevada, and earned his graduate degrees at Washington



State University. His poems and essays have appeared in well over a hundred journals and several anthologies, including *The Best American Poetry 1996* (Scribner's). His poetry chapbook *The Deep and Secret Color of Ice* was selected for the Small Press Poetry Prize in 2002 by Jane Hirshfield. More recently his poems have been featured on *Verse Daily* and *The Writer's Almanac*. He completed a term of service as Poet Laureate of Santa Barbara for 2011–2013.

Blooms and Birds of Burton Mesa

Field trip to Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve
 with Tim Matthews and Christine Thompson
 Sunday, May 1, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
 Participation is limited to 20
 Advance registration required at synature@west.net or
 693-5683
 Members free/nonmembers \$20

This trip will explore plants and birds of the unique ecosystem protected by Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve (BMER), and will include an account of the reserve's history. The sandy soil of ancient beach sand dunes supports a number of plant species found nowhere else on earth, and several localized species including La Purisima and shagbark manzanitas, Lompoc wallflower and Vandenberg monkeyflower. This last is an endangered species. May is flowering time for wallflower, fiesta flower, fiddlenecks and phacelia. Our field trip is timed for the height of spring bird migration. BMER attracts a number of migrating warbler species, and we may see the arrival of summer species such as pacific-slope flycatcher and black-headed



Vandenberg Monkeyflower at BMER, photo by Marc Kummel

grosbeak, as well as resident species. The trip will cover 4 miles of easy to moderate walking (some in soft sand).

Tim Matthews is the Scientific Aide for California Department of Fish and Wildlife at Burton Mesa and has led many field trips for SYVNHS over the years. **Christine Thompson**, Environmental Scientist, CDFW, is manager of BMER.

Vandenberg Flora and Rock Art

July, date TBA

We plan a July visit to explore some of the stunning rock art and interesting flora occurring at Vandenberg Air Force Base. Details are still being finalized. Stay tuned for more information and the trip registration schedule.

Students trying to decipher a Vandenberg AFB rock art panel, photo by Marc Kummel.

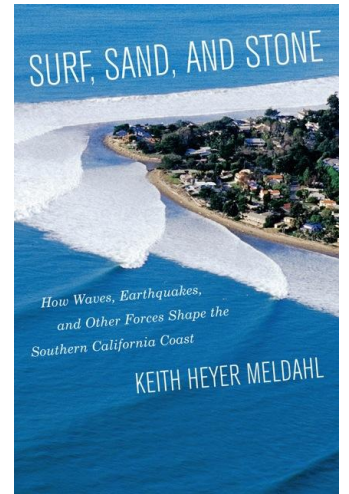


Past SYVNHS Programs:



(Clockwise from upper-left) Three photos from the Geological Exploration of The Upper Santa Ynez River field trip last November: Susie Bartz discusses the interesting local geology with participants; hiking through the woodland near Red Rock; an unusual (in this place) Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*) butterfly on fall flowers of native Fort Tejon Milk-Aster (*Stephanomeria cichoriacea*). Photos by John Evarts.





(Clockwise from upper-left) Exploring a pool along the river above Red Rock with Susie Bartz; cottonwood and sycamore trees already showing some fall color in November; we had a packed house for Keith Meldahl's lecture; two shots of Hugh Ranson's (with the white cap) Dragonfly ID class at Sedgwick Pond; examining the red rocks at Red Rock with Susie Bartz. The last photo is by Laura Baldwin, all the rest by John Evarts.



Marc's Stumper

Soon it will be time to get outside and enjoy the wildflowers that will appear if the El Niño rains appear as expected. The best wildflower fields are in the backcountry on Figueroa Mountain and beyond, far from human disturbance. But it's convenient that many wildflowers are abundant right along the roads. Introduced weeds are also common, but there are many natives like poppies and lupines that thrive along our highways despite traffic and mowing and scraping. Wildlife follows. What environmental factors make the roadsides so attractive for native wildflowers and wildlife?

About last issue's stumper: Every *poison fruit* is a stumper. Many immature fruit are toxic so they don't get eaten too soon. Some edible fruit have poison seeds so critters will drop them to sprout. One critter's love is another's poison – birds and chile-heads do love hot peppers. Some fruit are potent laxatives which makes sense. Some fruit like Bottle Gourds look edible, but their real adaptation is to float across oceans. Some critters make mistakes. I won't oversimplify – what about Baneberry and Nightshade and Nux Vomica? I'll always look for an explanation, and I'll be careful!

Here are two native wildflowers and even a mushroom that I find almost exclusively along roadsides. The plants are Chaparral Penstemon (*Penstemon heterophyllus*) and Chick Lupine (*Lupinus microcarpus* var. *densiflorus*). The mushroom is *Agaricus bitorquis* pushing up through the asphalt of our chipseal road. Why do these creatures seem to prefer roadsides? Photos by Marc Kummel.



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