



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*

President's Message

When the Society's Board of Directors scheduled its first meeting of the upcoming fall season for September 3rd, the date caught my attention: It was the 55th anniversary of President Lyndon B. Johnson signing the Wilderness Act into law. The 1964 act created the National Wilderness Preservation System and initially protected 54 areas totaling 9.1 million acres with this new designation.

The primary author of this landmark law was the Wilderness Society's Executive Director Howard Zahniser, who spent eight years and presented 66 revised drafts of the legislation before Congress passed it. He summarized it this way: "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." Unfortunately, Zahniser died four months before the Wilderness Act was signed into law. Today there are more than 108 million acres of federally protected wilderness found in 750 areas spread across 44 states. The Wilderness Act is now widely considered one of the

Upcoming SYVNHS Lectures, Field Trips, and Workshops

- Sept. 18 Wildlife Images from the UC Sedgwick Reserve (lecture)
- Sept. 28 Changing Birds at Nojoqui Falls County Park (field trip)
- Oct. 17 Santa Rosa Island Archaeology and Natural History (lecture)
- Oct. 26 Geology of Upper Oso Canyon (field trip)
- Nov. 2 Cachuma Lake Cruise: Winter Birds (field trip)
- Nov. 14 California Oaks in a Changing Environment (lecture)
- Dec. 7 Grow Your Own Native Oak (workshop)

pillars of conservation in America.

What is the relevance of the Wilderness Act to our organization? The answer is both specific and general. The Santa Ynez Valley is located less than an hour's drive from the San Rafael Wilderness, which was the first U.S. Forest Service Primitive Area to be designated wilderness in 1968. (One neighboring area, the Dick Smith Wilderness, is also in Santa Barbara County.) The SYVNHS has organized at least two field trips into the San Rafael Wilderness (one trailhead is at Nira campground). On the occasion of the Wilderness Act's

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Hurricane Deck in the San Rafael Wilderness from Potrero Trail.
Photo by John Evarts.



Yosemite National Park wilderness area. Photo by John Evarts.

40th anniversary in 2004, we hosted a lecture and visual tribute to the San Rafael Wilderness with local guidebook author and outdoor education leader Ray Ford. In 2017, two back-to-back lectures provided a vicarious portal into our local wilderness: James Wapotich's "Backpacking and Hiking in the San Rafael Wilderness" and Sam Spaulding's "Cultural Markings in Blue Stone: A Story of the San Rafaeles."



San Rafael Wilderness viewed from Catway Road. Photo by John Evarts.

A wide variety of other sites within the federal wilderness system have also provided a rich source of data and inspiration for many of our lecturers. A quick perusal of recent programs that we have offered confirms this connection to wilderness. Nicole Molinari's research into fire patterns relied, in part, on data gathered in wilderness areas of national forests in Southern California. Pamela Flick's talk on gray wolves included evidence of their presence in wilderness areas of northeast California. Peter Alagona's discussion of re-introducing grizzly bears to California posited



John Muir Wilderness. Photo by John Evarts.

that Sierra Nevada wilderness areas would be ideal release sites. Bill Tweed's lecture and book signing for *King Sequoia* was centered on the cultural and natural history legacy of Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks, which, like Yosemite, are over 90% designated as federal wilderness. Cathy Rose's lecture and book signing for *Rock Creek Wildflowers* showcased a subalpine flora from the John Muir Wilderness in the Eastern Sierra.

Wilderness-designated areas have often been featured in our programs, and it is wild places in general that are an essential source of discovery, fascination, and education for our members. This fall season, as usual, most of our field trips and lectures are an exploration of the wilder edges of our local region: birding at Nojoqui Falls County Park and Cachuma Lake; geology in the upper Santa Ynez River Recreation Area; wildlife images from Sedgwick Reserve's secluded water holes; indigenous culture and natural history on remote Santa Rosa Island; and an examination of the oak woodlands and savannas that dominate our valley and backcountry habitats. These are environments that afford an opportunity to enjoy and study nature without the overwhelming presence of humans.

Wallace Stegner, literary giant of the American West, wrote his famous "Wilderness Letter" to the committee working on the Wilderness Act in 1960. His essay's closing words exhorted them to consider more than the recreational and scientific value of wilderness: "We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope."

—John Evarts, President, SYVNHS Board



Hoover Wilderness. Photo by John Evarts.

Upcoming Lectures and Field Trips

Tales from the Trough: Wildlife Images from the UC Sedgwick Reserve

Free lecture with Kate McCurdy and Grant Canova Parker
Co-hosted by the Los Olivos Library
Wednesday, September 18, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
St. Mark's in-the-Valley Episcopal Church, Stacey Hall
2901 Nojoqui Avenue, Los Olivos

For the past eight years, motion-sensing cameras at the UC Sedgwick Reserve in Santa Ynez have captured images of wildlife that come to drink, and sometimes play, at the various “water holes” throughout the former Sedgwick Ranch.



Black bear enjoying a Sedgwick Reserve water hole.
Photo by Grant Canova Parker.

Bears, bobcats, bats, foxes, skunks, quail, and other wildlife, have been captured on film, moving through their day—or night. The 6000-acre reserve, donated to the University of California by the Sedgwick family, has served as an outdoor laboratory for researchers for over 20 years. The manager of the reserve, Kate McCurdy, has orchestrated her own kind of research project with the help of Grant Canova Parker, an energetic volunteer. At this special program, they will present a selection from the thousands of wildlife photos and videos collected, complete with musical accompaniment. This free presentation will kick off the Fall 2019 program of the Santa Ynez Valley Natural History Society.

Kate McCurdy has been manager of the UC Sedgwick Reserve for 12 years. She earned a degree in wildlife management from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. After an internship at Yosemite dedicated to mitigating human–blackbear conflicts in the 1990s, she headed an interdisciplinary team of rangers credited with a

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The UC Sedgwick Reserve manager Kate McCurdy.
Photo courtesy UC Sedgwick Reserve.

Changing Seasons, Changing Birds at Nojoqui Falls County Park

Birding field trip with Rebecca Coulter
Saturday, September 28, 8:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Participation is limited to 20. Advance registration begins August 28 at synature@west.net or 805/ 693-5683.
Members \$10. / Non-members \$25. / Children \$5.

Spend a morning birding the seasonal “changing of the guard” at Nojoqui Falls County Park. Fall sees the departure of breeding Purple Martins and Bullock’s Orioles for points south, and the arrival of goodies like Townsend’s Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and various sparrows to spend the winter in this temperate valley. We’ll explore the park environs, nearby grasslands, and the riparian zone for these

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Townsend's Warblers are winter visitors.
Photo by Becky Matsubara, creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en

winter visitors, plus any migrants just passing through. That's the lure of migration birding—who knows what might drop in? Of course, we'll welcome sightings of year-round resident species such as Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Yellow-billed Magpies, Orange-crowned Warblers, Western Bluebirds and many others. This portion of the field trip will end by noon, and for those who want to take in some coastal species, there is an optional extension of the trip to Gaviota State Park.



Left: Nuttall's Woodpeckers are year-round residents.
Photo by Daniel West, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nuttals_woodpecker.jpg

Rebecca Coulter has been birding in the Santa Barbara region for over 20 years. She leads field trips and birding classes for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and the SBCC Center for Lifelong Learning. She is head compiler for the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count in Santa Barbara, and enjoys sharing Santa Barbara's rich bird diversity and wide range of habitats with new birders. Rebecca is particularly interested in teaching how bird sounds can help build identification skills and enjoyment in the field.



Trip leader Rebecca Coulter. Courtesy photo.

Santa Rosa Island Archaeology and Natural History

Free lecture with John Johnson

Thursday, October 17, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

St. Mark's in-the-Valley Episcopal Church, Stacey Hall
2901 Nojoqui Avenue, Los Olivos

In 1959, Phil C. Orr, then curator of anthropology and paleontology at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, located human bones on Santa Rosa Island. He called these remains Arlington Springs Man and suspected that they could be 10,000 years old. How could such early humans have crossed the deep-water channel and what did the natural world provide for their survival when they arrived on Santarosae, the mega-island that comprised what are today's local Channel Islands—Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, and San Miguel? In 1989, modern radiocarbon dating analysis of material from these bone fragments



Santa Rosa Island of California's northern Channel Islands.
Photo by Sam Spaulding.

revealed that they were older, establishing an age of approximately 13,000 years BP (before the present). The bones from Arlington Springs Man are the oldest reliably dated human remains in the Americas.

Dr. John Johnson will discuss information gathered and gleaned from six field seasons of research at the Arlington Springs site, which dates from the end of the Pleistocene epoch, some 12,000 years ago. The flora, fauna, and environment were different from today in many respects: bones from the pygmy mammoth and from giant deer mice are found in the same geologic formation that contains the remains of Arlington Springs Man. Dr. Johnson will explore insights on strategies used by Paleoindians as they interacted with and influenced their natural surroundings.



Dr. John Johnson at the Arlington Springs site.
Photo from Arlington Springs project archives.

Dr. John Johnson's career has been devoted to understanding the culture and history of the Chumash Indians and their neighbors in south central California through the study of archaeology, archival records, and interviews with contemporary Native Americans. He heads a team that has been investigating the earliest evidence for people in coastal California at the Arlington Springs site on Santa Rosa Island. Since 1986, Dr. Johnson has served as curator of anthropology at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. He obtained his Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Geology of Upper Oso Canyon: Crunching and Cracking, Fire and Flood

Field Trip with Susie Bartz and Sabina Thomas

Saturday, October 26, 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Participation limited to 20. Advance registration begins September 26 at synature@west.net or 805/ 693-5683.

Members \$10 / Nonmembers \$25 / Children \$5. Participants may be required to pay an additional \$10 per vehicle to enter the upper Santa Ynez River Recreational Area.

This trip is a journey through geologic time and present-day disasters along Oso Creek, a major tributary of the Santa Ynez River. The canyon offers visual evidence of ongoing and intense compression of the earth's crust, exposing ancient ocean rocks with beautiful textures and a mélange of color. Recent flooding after major fires has carved new creek channels and other erosional features as Oso Creek flushes its bedload of rock material out toward the Santa Ynez River. The hike is four miles roundtrip, passing through oak woodland into open chaparral. It crosses the tightly folded rock layers of the Oso Syncline and two major faults, exposing markedly different landscapes along the way. The route is of moderate difficulty with some pebbly slopes along steep creek banks and a few crossings among boulders and cobbles in a mostly dry creek bed.

Lunch at the Nineteen Oaks knoll offers beautiful views of Little Pine Mountain and the surrounding backcountry, with the possibility of catching some early fall color across the landscape.



Fall colors in Upper Oso Canyon.
Photo by John Evarts.



Conglomerant boulder in Upper Oso Canyon.
Photo by Susie Bartz.

As a geology educator, **Susie Bartz** has worked for over 20 years with schools and community organizations to bring an awareness of earth science to the general public in outdoor settings — including many popular field trips for the Society. She enjoys hiking and backpacking and holds a degree in geology from SBCC. In 2009 she helped complete the project of publishing the maps of legendary geologist Tom Dibblee, who was her friend and mentor and in whose memory she dedicates her field trips.



Geologist Susie Bartz
Courtesy photo.

Assisting Susie on this trip is **Sabina Thomas**, an Earth and Planetary Sciences Department instructor at Santa Barbara City College and nature education manager at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.



Co-leader Sabina Thomas.
Courtesy photo.

Cachuma Lake Cruise: Winter Birds

Field Trip with Jay Bishop

Saturday, November 2, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Participation limited to 25. Advance registration begins

October 2 at synature@west.net or 805/ 693-5683.

Members \$15 / Nonmembers \$25 / Children \$10 (Per park policy, children are 5-12 years old, and children under 5 are not permitted). All vehicles must pay the \$10 park day use fee.

Spend a crisp fall morning birding on our local lovely reservoir, Cachuma Lake. Seasoned birder Jay Bishop will lead a two-hour boat trip on the lake, which is now over 75% full. We can expect to see many local birds of prey and migratory waterfowl. The high lake level means a greater variety of habitat for visiting and resident birds. Open, deep areas of the lake are prime diving habitat for Common Loons, Scaup, Ruddy Ducks, Common Mergansers, and Western and Clark's Grebes. Mud flats and shallow



Aerial view of Cachuma Lake, near capacity.
Photo by John Wiley, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aerial-LakeCachumaEastEnd.jpg

areas are visited by Green-winged Teal, Mallards, sandpipers, an occasional Yellow Legs, and other birds. We will of course look for Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, and Osprey, which are fairly reliable winter residents...but there are no guarantees. Bring a warm jacket and gloves, binoculars if you have some, and be prepared to see your breath.

Jay Bishop has been a Santa Ynez Valley resident for 22 years. His love and interest in nature began in the 1970s on the tar-covered beaches and wild hillsides of Summerland. In 1993, the gift of a Peterson Field Guide fueled a birding passion. Jay was the persona "Bluejay" with the Outdoor School at Rancho Alegre for 20 years, as a naturalist and education director. He has been a professional guide since 2005 and is a naturalist for the Alisal guest ranch. He is a Society board member, and has volunteered locally leading walks, talks, and workshops. Jay is also a full-time father.



Above, right: Clark's grebe.
Photo by Becky Matsubara / creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/



Right: Adult Bald Eagle.
Photo by Lonnie Box.

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90% reduction in bear-related incidents in the park. Kate went on to obtain a masters degree in natural resource management from Humboldt State University. She is proud to say there has never been a case of human-bear conflict at the reserve.

Grant Canova Parker is an eight-year Sedgwick Reserve volunteer and partner in the trail camera project. He has managed as many as eight cameras in the field, and has collected over 1.5 million photos. He places and moves cameras, re-installs cameras damaged by bears, and downloads the data monthly. His database serves a new research project in which UCSB scientists, using machine learning technology, can identify and count individual animals such as bear, mountain lion, and deer.



Reserve volunteer Grant Canova Parker.
Photo by Julie Klapp.

California Oaks in a Changing Environment

Free lecture with Frank Davis

Thursday, November 14, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

St. Mark's in-the-Valley Episcopal Church, Stacey Hall
2901 Nojoqui Avenue, Los Olivos

For thousands of years California oak woodlands have provided a bounty of ecological goods and services to human societies. In the 250 years since European settlement, oak woodlands have undergone significant changes in human use and associated landscape and ecosystem structure, composition, and function. Some keystone species,



Oak savanna at the UC Sedgwick Reserve.
Photo by Nick Dicroce.

Grow Your Own Native Oak

Free workshop with Brenda Juarez and Gary Nett

Saturday, December 7, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Co-hosted by the UC Sedgwick Reserve

3566 Brinkerhoff Avenue, Santa Ynez, CA 93460

Participation is limited to 20. Advance registration begins November 7 at synature@west.net or 805/ 693-5683.

In this free hands-on workshop, Gary Nett and Brenda Juarez will offer tips for planting and growing native oaks from acorns and seedlings. In addition to demonstrating planting methods and techniques for protection from predators, basic “do’s” and “don’ts” will be covered. We will also take a short walk to see the three species of oaks that grow on the reserve, and discuss the natural history associated with oak woodlands and concerns about oak reproduction and recruitment. Participants should bring gloves and wear sturdy walking shoes. Tools and materials will be provided.

Brenda Juarez is a docent at the UC Sedgwick Reserve and an oak tree advocate. A graduate of the California Naturalist certification program in 2013, her “capstone project”

like the California grizzly bear, have been eliminated. Domestic livestock, exotic diseases, and invasive plants and animals have transformed oak woodland communities. Fire, once a dominant force, is now suppressed. Climate, watershed hydrology, and nutrient cycling have changed markedly over the past century. In this talk, Dr. Frank Davis will summarize historical trends in the distribution and abundance of local oak species and present recent research examining possible oak futures under projected climate and land use change.

Frank Davis is a Distinguished Professor at the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management, UCSB. He is director of the La Kretz Research Center at the UC Sedgwick Reserve and executive director of the Network Office of the National Science Foundation Long Term Ecological Research Network. In 1990 he founded, and for 27 years led, the UCSB Biogeography Lab, focusing on the ecology and conservation of California species and ecosystems. Frank received his PhD in Geography and Environmental Engineering from The Johns Hopkins University.



Dr. Frank Davis.
Courtesy photo.

entailed creating and implementing an oak restoration project at the reserve and comparing a variety of planting techniques. Hence was born the “Oakies,” a volunteer oak planting and nurturing group at Sedgwick that has planted hundreds of seedlings of Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*) using two different watering approaches.

Gary Nett is a charter member of the Sedgwick “Oakies” and a certified “garden hermit.” He is an active Sedgwick docent—enthusiastic about and devoted to protecting and restoring local native oak tree populations, having personally planted and nurtured hundreds of oaks.



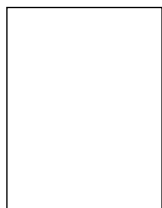
Left: Workshop leaders Gary Nett and Brenda Juarez.
Photo by Anna Nett. Right: Planting an oak. Photo by Brenda Juarez

Marc's Stumper

It's too early for *fall colors*, though some native plants like poison oak are already starting to show some color. Our local California trees are mostly evergreen, though we also have deciduous trees that will soon start to show color before they drop their leaves for winter. This stumper is not why some trees drop their leaves while others don't, that's just one of nature's many successful strategies. But why do some deciduous trees and shrubs make a show of their autumn leaves? The leaves are dying. How does it benefit the tree that they are also beautiful?

About last issue's stumper: Most animals, plants, and even fungi produce offspring that are not identical to either parent. Cloning or dividing into identical offspring seems easier, but in our world where climate and life itself are always changing, only creatures who can adapt will survive. Sexual reproduction is good for *individual differences*, and individual differences are good for survival. But there's still a stumper here. Genetic diversity may be good for populations, but what is the advantage of making reproduction more difficult for the individual? It's still an open question.

The Poison Oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*, Anacardiaceae) on the left is already showing "fall colors" in June! The Bigleaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*, Sapindaceae) on the right is dropping its leaves and showing color in November. Why do these native trees and shrubs make such a show of their dying leaves?
 Marc Kummel's nature photos are at www.flickr.com/photos/treebeard/



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