



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*

SYVNHS 20th Anniversary Celebration

**Field trips, lectures, children's activities, picnic
Saturday, April 4, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
UC Sedgwick Reserve, Tipton House
Advance registration (required) begins March 4
at synature@west.net or 805/ 693-5683
Free event open to the public, and all ages are
welcome**

Join us in celebrating the 20th anniversary of
the Society! The founding meeting of the Society
was held in the Studio at Sedgwick Reserve on

April 16, 2000. More than 35 individuals gathered
on a cool spring day to share their ideas for a new
organization devoted to natural history in the
Santa Ynez Valley region. After the meeting, the
group took a long ramble through the oak wood-
lands, which were especially verdant after that
year's winter rains. Before the end of 2000, the
Society became a nonprofit California corporation
and had sponsored two field trips, three lectures,
a workshop, and our first award for a student
project.



SYVNHS field trip to look at fire-followers in a post-burn area of an oak woodland at Sedgwick. Photo by John Evarts.



Native oak planting workshop hosted by SYVNHS at Sedgwick in 2016. Photo by Sam Spaulding.



Barn Canyon near Tipton House. Photo by John Evarts.

Upcoming SYVNHS Lectures and Field Trips

- Jan. 30 A Year in the Life of an Elephant Seal (lecture)
- Feb. 1 Piedras Blancas Elephant Seal Rookery (field trip)
- Feb. 19 Annual Members' Meeting prior to lecture
- Feb. 19 Rare plants of Santa Barbara County (lecture)
- Mar. 21 Coreopsis Hill and the Guadalupe Dunes (field trip)
- Apr. 4 SYVNHS 20th Anniversary Celebration
- Apr. 9 Plant Adaptations & Recovery from Wildfire (lecture)
- Apr tbd Plant Recovery from Wildfire (field trip)
- May 2 Migrant Breeding Birds at Quiota Creek (field trip)
- May 16 Natural History of Cold Spring Canyon (field trip)

SYVNHS 20th Anniversary Celebration, (cont.)

Save the date, and help us look back — and look forward. Come for the morning hikes, lectures, or children's activities (generously provided by NatureTrack), and stay for a picnic lunch. Bring your own meal or pre-purchase a box lunch (via our website) that will be waiting for you at the Reserve. We'll provide a delicious cake for dessert and extra refreshments. We have planned both indoor and outdoor activities, and a full schedule of events will be sent to all registrants. Short field trips, leaving from the Tipton House, will begin at 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Our SYVNHS board members and others will be leading easy walks, including the following: birding (Fred Emerson), botany (Liz Gaspar), oak ecology (John Evarts and Margie Popper). Inside Tipton House, there will be talks by board members at 9:00 a.m., "Monarchs — Facts and Fate" (Marion Schlinger) and at 10:00

a.m., "Corvids of the Santa Ynez Valley" (Dennis Beebe). Throughout the morning, NatureTrack docents will provide several activities that are popular with children.



Winter morning from the Reserve's Anderson Overlook.
Photo by John Evarts.

Upcoming SYVNHS Lectures, Field Trips, and Workshops

Live Birth – A Year in the Life of an Elephant Seal

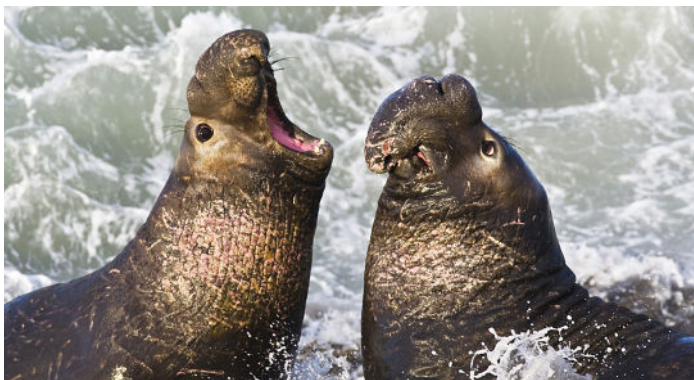
Free lecture with B. Misty Wycoff

Thursday, January 30, 7:00 p.m.

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

Note: This lecture precedes a field trip to Piedras Blancas to view the elephant seals. See February 1 entry, below.

Northern elephant seals gather from December through March in large breeding colonies on several Channel Islands in California and Baja California. They also spend the pupping and mating season at a handful of smaller mainland sites, including on the sandy beaches of Piedras



Rough and tumble life of male northern elephant seals.

Photo by Michael L. Baird (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)

Blancas on the central coast. At this location, visitors hear the seals well before they see them. Northern elephant seals were hunted to near extinction in the late 1800s, but they rebounded successfully after protections were put in place. Known as the largest seal in the northern hemisphere, the males can be up to 14-16 feet long and the females 9-12 feet long. The nose on the adult male, as well as its size, is the derivation of the common name. B. Misty Wycoff will present this talk that explores the life of a female elephant seal from birth through the first year.

Ms. Wycoff is the administrator of the Speaker Bureau for Friends of the Elephant Seal, a nonprofit organization. She has been a docent for the organization for five years at Piedras Blancas. She is a semi-retired psychologist, has lived on the Central Coast for the last 15 years, and is the author of *High Rain: Love Letters to the Central Coast*.

The Piedras Blancas Elephant Seal Rookery

Free field trip with Friends of the Elephant Seal docents
Saturday, February 1, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., not including driving time each way

Advance registration at synature@west.net
or 805/ 693-5683

There is no fee for this field trip.

Paired with the lecture on January 30, the Natural History Society is also offering a free field trip to the seal rookery at Piedras Blancas. This is an opportune time to

(Continued on next page)

visit the rookery, as it is the birthing as well as the mating season. Friends of the Elephant Seal docents will greet our group from the Society. You may want to visit www.elephantseal.org for more information on preparing for your trip to the rookery. The estimated driving time one way is 2 hours from the Valley. Participants must provide their own transportation and carpooling is advised. More logistic information will be provided to trip registrants. We request that you make advance registration, although the trip is free.



Female northern elephant seal with her pup.
Photo by Jerry Kirkhart (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)

Rare Plants of Santa Barbara County: Why Uncommon Plants Matter and What We're Doing to Save Them

Lecture with Heather Schneider

Co-hosted by the Los Olivos Library and Santa Ynez Valley Botanic Garden

Wednesday, February 19, 7:00 p.m.

Los Olivos Community Organization Hall
2374 Alamo Pintado Avenue, Los Olivos.

With more than 6,500 kinds of native plants, California is the most botanically diverse state in the nation. However, more than one-third of those plants are considered rare. The Santa Barbara area is home to more than 150 kinds of rare plants. But why should we care about rare plants? Dr. Schneider will answer that question while highlight-



The rare late-flowered mariposa lily, *Calochortus fimbriatus*, is locally abundant in the Santa Barbara area, but occurs in few other places across the state. Photo courtesy of Heather Schneider.

ing some of the unique and beautiful rare plants found in Santa Barbara County. She'll also tell you what to look for while hiking this spring and share some of the work that the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden is doing to advance rare plant conservation.

Dr. Heather Schneider is the Rare Plant Biologist at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden where she is involved in research, conservation, and outreach, and also manages the Garden's conservation seed bank. She earned a PhD in botany from the University of California, Riverside and has worked across California and the American West on topics such as ecology, evolutionary biology, conservation, invasive plants, and desert tortoise biology.



Dr. Heather Schneider hiking near Ojai. Photo courtesy of Heather Schneider.

Annual Members' Meeting

Short meeting preceding the evening presentation
Wednesday, February 19, 6:45 p.m. Los Olivos Community Organization Hall.

The Annual Members' Meeting will be held at 6:45 p.m. immediately before Dr. Schneider's lecture in the evening. We will elect new board members for 2020 and hear a brief Treasurer's report. SYVNHS members, please join us at the Los Olivos Community Organization Hall.

Coreopsis Hill and the Guadalupe Dunes

Field trip with Larry Ballard

Saturday, March 21, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Participation limited to 20. Advance registration begins

February 21 at synature@west.net or 805/ 693-5683

Members \$10 / Nonmembers \$25 / Children \$5

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.

Larry Ballard has an interest in all aspects of the region's natural history and has a special appreciation for dune ecology on the Central Coast. For two decades he has been a trip leader for our organization as well as for other groups and institutions in Santa Barbara County. To prepare for your visit to the dunes, visit our website's "Program Reports" page and scroll down to see captioned photos and natural history information from our trip to Coreopsis Hill in March, 2016.



Above: Trip leader Larry Ballard. Photo by John Everts.

Right: Coast-loving Giant Tickseed, *Leptosyne gigantea* (formerly Giant Coreopsis, *Coreopsis gigantea*). Photo by John Everts.



Past SYVNHS trip to Coreopsis Hill, with its eponymous plant and other wildflowers. Photo by John Everts.



Crisp dune mint, *Monardella crispera*, an endangered species we can see on this trip. Photo by John Everts.

Chaparral Plant Adaptations and Patterns of Recovery from Wildfire: Examples from San Ysidro and Cold Springs Canyons after the Thomas Fire

Lecture and field trip with Matt Kay

Free Lecture

Co-hosted by the Los Olivos Library

Thursday, April 9, 7:30 p.m.

Los Olivos Community Organization

2374 Alamo Pintado Avenue, Los Olivos

Wildfire is a natural part of chaparral plant communities. Not surprisingly, chaparral plant species have interesting adaptations that allow them to regrow and/or reproduce post fire. For many species, wildfire is an important event to which reproduction is timed. Some species grow almost exclusively in burn areas, but only for a few years after fire. This lecture will explore the botany and ecology of fire recovery in chaparral plant communities. An emphasis will be placed on species and photographs from San Ysidro and Cold Springs Canyon after the 2017 Thomas Fire. The talk will include the importance of chaparral conservation and ecosystem services.



Large-flowered Phacelia, *Phacelia grandiflora*. Photo by Matt Kay.



Poppies and lupines on Sage Hill. Photo by Matt Kay.

Field Trip

April: Date and location to be determined, pending blooming conditions

Participation limited to 20. Advance registration begins

March 15 at synature@west.net or 805/ 693-5683

Members \$10 / Nonmembers \$25 / Children \$5

Matt Kay will lead a field trip to a local, post-fire chaparral plant community in the Santa Ynez Mountains in April. This field trip complements his April 9 lecture, Chaparral Plant Adaptations and Patterns of Recovery from Wildfire. Site selection will depend on bloom timing and local abundance in one of the local burn areas. While attending the lecture in advance of the field trip would benefit participants, it is not required.

Matt Kay grew up in Santa Barbara, where he developed a love for biology and natural history. This led to biology degrees from the University of Oregon (BS and MS), and a PhD from UCSB. Matt teaches botany and general biology at SBCC.



Fire poppy, *Papaver californicum*. Photo by Matt Kay.

Welcoming Migrant Breeding Birds Back to Quiota Creek

Field trip with Tim Matthews

Saturday, May 2, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Participation limited to 20. Advance registration begins

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

Members \$10 / Nonmembers \$25 / Children \$5

We return to Quiota Creek during the height of spring migration, when many species return from southern wintering grounds to follow the light, food, and breeding sites and opportunities. Quiota Creek is on the north-facing slopes of the Santa Ynez Mountains, and it is a relatively moist, shady, and cool corridor. These conditions also support an abundance of protein-rich insects, the go-to energy source for breeding female birds and hungry chicks. Tim Matthews knows the area like an old familiar, and he will lead us a mile or two along the creek valley. There may be opportunities to do upland birding as well. Reliable and beautiful local breeders include Yellow Warblers, Lazuli Buntings, Warbling Vireos, Bullock's Orioles, Ash-throated and Pacific-slope Fly-catchers, and more.

Tim Matthews is an avid naturalist, sportsman and conservationist who has led trips for Audubon, U.S. Forest Service, and the Society.



Above: Bullock's oriole.
Photo by Kevin Cole,
licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Right: Lazuli bunting.
Photo by Bill Bouton,
licensed under CC BY 2.0.



Natural History of Cold Spring Canyon

Field trip with Larry Ballard

Saturday, May 16, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Participation limited to 20. Advance registration begins

April 16 at synature@west.net or 805/ 693-5683

Members \$10 / Nonmembers \$25 / Children \$5

The Thomas Fire in late 2017 and the Montecito debris flow in early 2018 left much of the Cold Spring Canyon area unrecognizable. Those disturbances opened up areas for both fire-followers and flood-followers. On this trip we'll discuss some of the geomorphology and geology that

have shaped this watershed and examine the rebounding biodiversity along the stream. Canyon wrens hop along the boulder-strewn creek bed where we'll see red-rock skimmers, California tree frogs, downy monkey flowers, and several species of Phacelia. Single colonies of California lace fern and summer holly grow farther along the trail.



This hike along lower Cold Spring Trail is not too strenuous, although we plan to cover about three miles roundtrip with an elevation gain of 700 feet. The trail has been reconstructed in places, but also includes some narrow and uneven spots. Bring snacks or a light lunch. There are no facilities at the trailhead.

Larry Ballard is a naturalist with a focus on botany and has been a popular field trip leader for the Natural History Society and other organizations for more than 20 years.

Left: Golden Eardrops, *Ehrendorferia chrysantha*, a fire-follower, growing in Cold Spring Canyon July 2019. Photo by Liz Gaspar.

Right: Cold Spring Canyon July 2019. Photo by Liz Gaspar.



Recent Field Trips

Photos by John Evarts

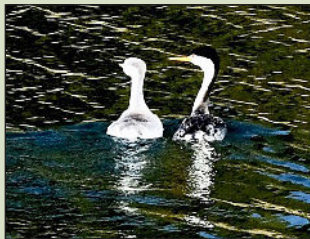
Lake Cachuma Boat Trip, Nov. 2, 2019



Left: Cachuma Lake Naturalist Rosey Bishop (boat captain) and her husband Jay (trip leader) attracted a large crowd for our trip to bird on Cachuma Lake.

Below, left: Clark's Grebes were abundant.

Below, right: Cachuma Lake was near 75% of capacity when we cruised the lake.



Oak Planting Workshop, Dec. 7, 2019

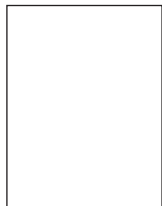


Left: Gary Nett and Brenda Juarez demonstrate oak-planting hole preparation at our workshop at Sedgwick Reserve.

Recent Field Trips: Upper Oso Canyon Geology, October 26, 2019



Above: Naturally, we took our group photo in front of this amazing slickenside!
Right, above: A large outcrop of Radiolarian chert in the streambank. The distinctive layers are likely the result of periods of cyclical cooling and warming in the earth's climate.
Right, below: What hiking trip across the Little Pine Fault would be complete without seeing some exquisite exposures of serpentinite?



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