



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*

Lichens: a Talk and Walk at Sedgwick Reserve

Lecture/Field Trip with Rikke Næsborg

Saturday, March 2, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

UC Sedgwick Reserve, Tipton House

Participation is limited to 20.

Registration opens at 9:00 a.m. February 2 for members
and February 24 for nonmembers at
syvnhs@syvnature.org or 805/693-5683.

Directions to Sedgwick Reserve will be sent to registrants.

Lichens are found in almost every habitat on all kinds of surfaces around the world, but since they are often small and somewhat inconspicuous, they are frequently overlooked. That is a pity because lichens are extraordinary and complex organisms. Not only are lichens little ecosystems that consist of a symbiotic association between at least one fungus and at least one alga; lichens also play significant roles in the ecosystem from colonization and stabilization to contribution to the nutrient cycle. Lichens have been used for centuries by humans as dyes, medicines, and food. More recently a range of new uses have been employed such as monitoring air pollution. California hosts over 2000 lichen species, spanning a fantastic array of colors and shapes. This talk will explore the fascinating and amazing world of lichens.



Rikke Reese Næsborg, Ph.D., is the first Tucker Lichenologist and Curator of the Lichenarium at Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Rikke earned her bachelor's and master's degrees at University of Southern Denmark and went on to earn a doctorate in systematic botany from Uppsala University in Sweden.

Above: Lichenologist Rikke Reese Næsborg examining a fog lichen. Photo by Cameron Williams.

Far right: Orange golden-eye lichen and gray lace lichen are shown here growing on an oak. The latter lichen is California's state lichen. Photo by Rikke Reese Næsborg.

Upcoming SYVNHS Lectures and Field Trips

March 2	Lichens at Sedgwick (Lecture / Field trip)
March 6	Annual Members' Meeting (before evening lecture)
March 6	Central California's Amphibians & Reptiles (Lecture)
March 13	Wild New World (Lecture)
April 21	Figueroa Mountain Spring Wildflowers (Field trip)
May 11	Burton Mesa Chaparral & Birding Exploration (Field trip)
May 17	The Secret Lives of Snakes (Lecture)
June 20	Mindful Yoga / Nature Walk (Field trip)
Pop-Ups	Short notice events may be posted on the website and emailed to our members and friends

Above: Although it can be difficult to predict a good wildflower year, any spring hike on upper Figueroa Mountain is likely to guarantee fine vistas of the Santa Ynez Valley. Photo by John Everts



Central California's Amphibians and Reptiles: Diversity and Beauty

Free Zoom presentation with Dr. Rayna Bell
Wednesday, March 6, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

The Zoom link will be emailed to SYVNHS members and friends of the Society, and it will also be posted to our website, www.syvnature.org. A recording of the presentation will be posted online after the event.

Reptiles and amphibians are often overlooked as part of our local wildlife, but they are a diverse and fascinating group important to their habitats and vulnerable to climate change. Dr. Rayna Bell of the California Academy of Sciences is an evolutionary biologist whose research on amphibians and reptiles seeks to understand the evolution of their diversity as a key to understanding their vulnerabilities and potential strengths as our natural world changes. Her presentation this evening will highlight the uniqueness and beauty of amphibian and reptile species of California and especially of our area.



Above, top: California Red-legged Frog (seen here in Santa Ynez Valley) is federally listed as Threatened, and its population has declined due to various threats, such as habitat loss, climate change, and chytrid fungus. Photo by John Everts.

Above, bottom: Blainville's Horned Lizards are found in dryer, sandy habitats of cismontane California, such as this specimen in Cuyama Valley. Photo by John Everts.

With a doctorate in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Cornell University, **Dr. Bell** was a Research Scientist and Curator of Amphibians and Reptiles at the National Museum of Natural History before joining the California Academy of Sciences as Curator of Herpetology. She has studied a variety of frog species around the world, and with her research group at the Academy, studies the evolution, ecology, and conservation of reptiles and amphibians.



Above, top: California Newt (seen here at Arroyo Hondo) is endemic to the state, and although they are toxic to many potential predators, they are threatened by nonnative fish species that eat their eggs. Photo by John Everts.

Above, bottom: A Southern California Alligator Lizard basks on a nice exposure of serpentinite at UC Sedgwick Reserve. Photo by John Everts.

Annual Members' Meeting

Short meeting preceding the
evening presentation
Wednesday, March 6, 6:45 p.m.

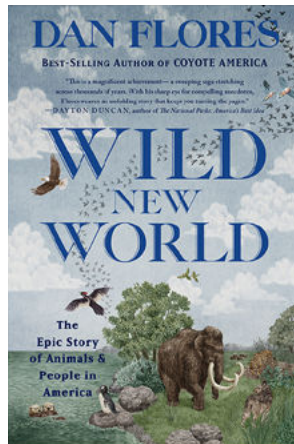
Immediately preceding Dr. Bell's Zoom presentation this evening, the Annual Members' Meeting will be held at 6:45 p.m. to elect board members for 2024, and to hear a brief Treasurer's report. Members, please join us for this brief meeting.

Wild New World: The Epic Story of Animals and People in North America

Free Zoom Presentation with Dr. Dan Flores
Wednesday, March 13, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

The Zoom link will be emailed to SYVNHS members and friends of the Society, and it will also be posted to our website, www.syvnature.org. A recording of the presentation will be posted online after the event.

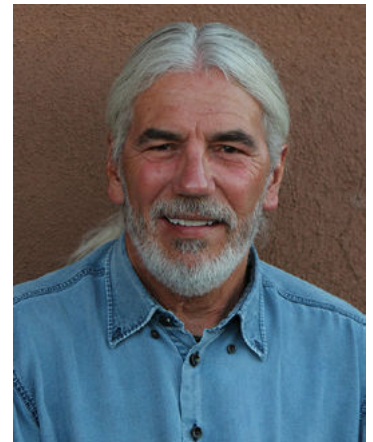
This Zoom webinar by acclaimed historian and author, Dan Flores, will focus on his most recent book, *Wild New World: The Epic Story of Animals and People in North America*. Dr. Flores spoke in-person to the SYVNHS in 2017 after publication of his book, *Coyote America*. This time, his upcoming Zoom talk will be from his home in New Mexico. Flores will present an overview of *Wild New World*, explaining what he learned in researching and writing about the big picture of humans and animals in America.



Book cover, *Wild New World*, published by W.W. Norton.

His presentation will include some selected readings from his book, along with his commentary. There will be an opportunity for questions from the Zoom audience after Dr. Flores' talk.

Dr. Dan Flores is the A. B. Hammond Professor Emeritus of Western History at the University of Montana and the author of numerous books, essays, and articles on various aspects of western U.S. history, including natural history, environment, and art and culture of the West. His newest book, *Wild New World*, has garnered notable awards, including Winner of the 2023 Rachel Carson Environment Book Award and Winner of the 2023 National Outdoor Book Award for Natural History Literature. Dr. Flores recently had an opinion piece ("How the Endangered Species Act Saved America") published in the December 12, 2023 issue of TIME magazine.



Author Dan Flores. Photo by Sara Dant.

Figuroa Mountain Spring Wildflowers

Field trip with John Evarts and Margie Popper

Sunday, April 21, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Participation is limited to 20.

Registration opens at 9 a.m. on March 22 for members and on April 1 for nonmembers at svynhs@syvnature.org or 805/693-5683.

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

Directions to the trailhead will be sent to registrants.

Figuroa Mountain is a celebrated spring wildflower destination known for poppies, lupines, chocolate lilies, mariposa lilies, and many other showy species of annuals and perennials. Naturalists Margie Popper and John Evarts will lead a hike on the mountain to take in some of this botanical diversity. The trailhead will be located on the upper portion of the mountain and will be picked from a number of possibilities based on where the blooms and trail conditions are best. Routes under consideration involve at least 800 feet of elevation gain and around 4 miles of hiking roundtrip. Directions to the trailhead will be sent to registrants.

The trip will start at the parking area below the entrance to Midland School Trails with a short introduction and to allow for voluntary carpooling. Then we will drive

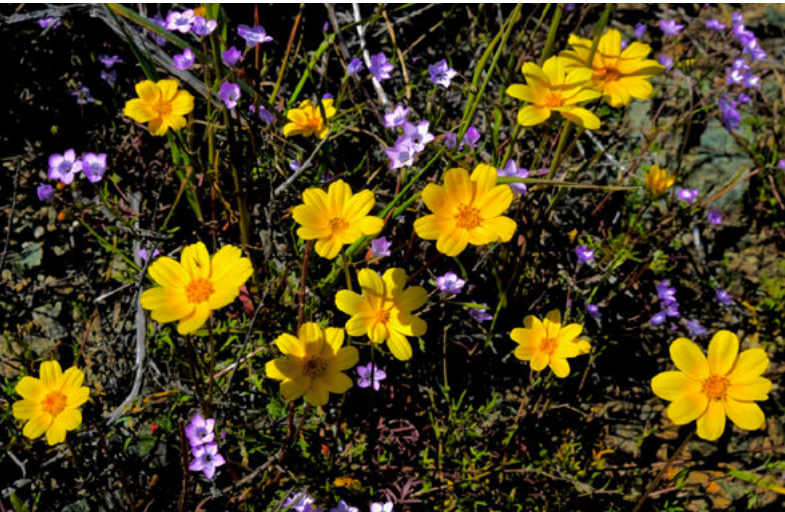
approximately 30 minutes to the parking area for the trailhead on upper Figuroa Mountain. We plan a midday lunch stop at a scenic location at the turn-around spot. Sturdy hiking shoes, trekking poles, and long pants (to protect against poison oak and ticks) are strongly recommended. Bring plenty of water, a lunch, and trail snacks. Good physical condition and good balance are recommended for this trip.

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Silver bush lupine is a showy and nicely scented perennial that does well on the Monterey shale soils at higher elevation of the San Rafael Mountains. Photo by John Evarts.

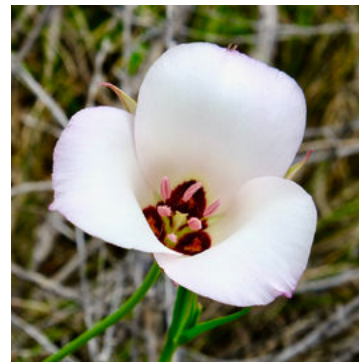
John Evarts and **Margie Popper** have retired from running their company, Cachuma Press, which published *Oaks of California*, *Conifers of California*, and other natural history, travel, and gardening books. They helped launch the SYVNHS in 2000 and have been active in the Society since it was founded. They led a hike for the Society down Fir Canyon last fall that concentrated on introducing trip participants to 14 of Figueroa's 20 native tree species.



Above: Coreopsis (yellow) and California gilia tolerate areas of Figueroa with serpentine soil, and they can be relatively abundant after a wet winter. Photo by John Evarts.



Above: Sky lupine is among the more common and showy annuals on Figueroa Mountain, and it can often be found near California poppy or the similar-looking tufted poppy. Photo by John Evarts.



Left: Catalina mariposa lily is one of five Calochortus species in the Figueroa Mountain area and is usually the first to bloom. Photo by John Evarts.

Burton Mesa: Maritime Chaparral and Birding Exploration

Field Trip with Tim Matthews

Saturday, May 11, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Participation limited to 20.

Registration opens at 9 a.m. on April 13 for members and on April 23 for nonmembers at syvnhs@syvnature.org or 805/ 693-5683.

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

Directions to Burton Mesa will be sent to registrants.



Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve is a unique area that consists of 5,368 acres between Purisima Hills and Santa Ynez Mountains and encompasses one of the last significant stands of maritime chaparral in California. The Central Maritime Chaparral community is dominated by ceanothus, manzanita, chamise, California coffee berry, black sage, coast live oak, and coastal scrub species. Typical birds

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Above: Nuttall's woodpecker. Photo by Ingrid V Taylor. CC BY-NC 2.0 Deed.

Left: Burton Mesa maritime chaparral. CDFW photo by Janice Mackey. CC BY 2.0 Deed.

include Anna's hummingbird, Nuttall's woodpecker, acorn woodpecker, wren, California thrasher, blue-gray gnatcatcher, warbler species, and others. Sightings at the pond can include Canada goose, ruddy duck, widgeon and other ducks, sora, and marsh wren, among others. Badgers, bobcats, deer, mountain lions, packrats, and snakes may also be observed. The property is owned by the State Lands Commission and leased to CDFW for management, operation, and maintenance. It became an ecological reserve in 2004, which granted special protection to the rare, threatened, and endangered plant species.

This walk is mostly flat and fairly easy, though sandy in places. There are no facilities at the trailhead.



Above, left: Vandenberg monkeyflower (*Diplacus vandenbergensis*) is a tiny endemic annual herb that has federal Endangered status. Photo by Dieter Wilkin/USFWS. CC BY 2.0 Deed.

Above, right: The designated Rare Blochman's larkspur (*Delphinium parryi* ssp. *blochmaniae*). Photo by Tim Matthews. CC BY 2.0 Deed.

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

The Secret Lives of Snakes

Free lecture and book promotion with Dr. Emily Taylor
Co-sponsored by UC Sedgwick Reserve
Friday, May 17, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

UC Sedgwick Reserve, Tipton House. Participation is limited to 60.

Join us before the lecture for a bring-your-own picnic. Gates will open at 5:00 p.m.

Registration opens on Saturday, April 20 at 9:00 a.m., at syvnhs@syvnature.org or 805/ 693-5683. This is a live and Zoom presentation. The Zoom link will be emailed to SYVNHS members and friends of the Society, and also posted to our website, www.syvnature.org. A recording of the presentation will be posted online after the event.

Join us at the Sedgwick Reserve for a fun evening celebrating the snakes of California! Dr. Emily Taylor and her students will greet you with the friendly Cal Poly ambassador snakes as you arrive. Emily will give a presentation entitled, "The Secret Lives of Snakes," with stories of snake encounters from her 25 years of studying these scaly animals around the world. These stories will be brought to life with beautiful photographs and movies of snakes, including footage obtained from recent advances in



technology that Emily and her students are using to spy on snakes and learn about their amazing secret lives. In celebration of the release of her book, *California Snakes and How to Find Them*, published by Heyday Press, Emily will punctuate the presentation with excerpts from the book on our state's bounty of legless creatures. The book will be available for purchase and signing at the event.

Emily Taylor is a Professor of Biological Sciences at the California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, California, where she conducts research on the physiology, ecology, and conservation biology of California reptiles and amphibians with her students. She has a bachelor's degree in English from UC Berkeley and a Ph.D. in Biology from Arizona State University. *California Snakes and How to Find Them* is her first popular science book, though she has been a biology textbook author for many years. She lives in Atascadero with her husband Steve and their menagerie of rescue animals. Follow her on social media @snakeymama.



Far left: Dr. Emily Taylor. Courtesy photo.

Left: Western rattlesnake. Photo by Spencer Riffle.

Summer Solstice Mindful Yoga / Nature Walk

Field trip with Laurie Burnaby and Marion Schlinger
 Thursday, June 20, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.
 Participation limited to 20. No prior yoga experience necessary.
 Registration opens at 9:00 a.m. on May 23 for members and June 6 for nonmembers at syvnhs@syvnature.org or 805/693-5683.
 Members \$10 / Nonmembers \$25 / Children \$5
 Field trip walk location will be sent to registrants.

Join Laurie and Marion for a gentle three-mile walk along a paved road in a quiet, mostly wooded area near Santa Ynez. Laurie will incorporate yoga into our walk at strategic stops along the way to enhance the physical and mental experience of nature. Marion will focus your attention and appreciation of the various scents, sounds, and textures we find along the way. The hope is that this yoga/nature walk will enhance the physical and mental experience of being in a natural environment. You will be refreshed and perhaps find some yoga poses to bring into your everyday life. Please wear comfortable clothing and walking shoes (no sandals) and bring water and sunscreen. A hat is optional.

Laurie Burnaby has been a yoga teacher and yoga therapist for many years. While recovering from a hip replacement in 2010, she developed the Mindful Yoga Walk as a means of recovery and healing. Her main interest is in the therapeutic aspects of yoga and her strength is an ability to accommodate each person where they are and offer practices that will meet their needs.



Yoga teacher Laurie Burnaby. Courtesy photo.



Marion Schlinger is a naturalist/entomologist and loves being out in nature enjoying the plants, birds, and critters, including insects, that she finds either in her garden or on long walks with her labrador, Max.

Left: Naturalist Marion Schlinger and her dog, Max. Courtesy photo.

Field Trips Last Fall



Above: On our Santa Cruz Island trip, we hiked cliff-top trails above dramatic exposures of both volcanic and sedimentary rock. Photo by John Everts.



Right, top: Paul Collins (center), Emeritus Curator of Vertebrate Zoology at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, takes questions during our October field trip to Santa Cruz Island, which he co-led with geologist Dr. Sabina Thomas. Photo by John Everts.



Right, bottom: Margie Popper, (center, with poles) and John Everts co-led the "Trees of Figueroa Mountain" field trip and hike in November to this spot in Fir Canyon, where 14 tree species were in close proximity. Photo by John Everts.