



# 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.*

## Dear Members and Friends of SYVNHS...

by Dennis Beebe, SYVNHS Board President

On December 11, we concluded our 2016 fall season with a wonderful field trip to Morro Bay and Montana de Oro with leaders Joan Lentz and Larry Ballard. A glorious day; photo highlights will soon be posted to the website. My thanks and congratulations to all those who made the entire 2016 program possible, particularly our energetic Board members.

Your Board of Directors recently concluded their development of the Winter/Spring programs for 2017 and I'm sure you will find these events to your liking. You'll see we're kind of lecture-intensive during the (hopefully) rainy season and then we transition to the great outdoors starting in March.

I want to single out Laura Baldwin, our departing Board member and Program Coordinator, for ensuring that all of our programs over several years were so well-planned and implemented. Laura's departure will create a challenge but we're up to it (that's why we get paid the big bucks). But help and suggestions are always welcome from our

## Upcoming SYVNHS Lectures and Field Trips

- Jan. 31 Coyote America (lecture)
- Feb. 11 Annual Members' Meeting
- Feb. 11 California Oak Studies (lecture)
- Mar. 2 Harnessing Water & Harvesting Soil (lecture)
- Mar. 4 Exploring Mount Dibblee (field)
- Mar. 18 Carrizo Plain National Monument (field)
- Apr. 9 Local Spring Wildflower Foray (field)
- Apr. 22 Quiota Creek Birds and Wildflowers (field)
- May 11 Mosquitoes and Mosquito-borne Disease (lecture)

membership. Members who may be reluctant to sign up for an official Board position can still offer their help and expertise. We will be soliciting that kind of help at our Annual Meeting on February 11 at the Sedgwick Reserve.

And finally, on behalf of your Board, I thank all of you who contributed to our annual appeal. Your contributions amounted to over \$1800 and will provide us with an expanded resource to provide the expert lecturers and field trip leaders you have come to expect.

## Upcoming Lectures and Field Trips

### Coyote America: A Natural and Supernatural History

Free lecture and book signing with Professor Dan Flores  
Tuesday, January 31, 7:00 p.m.  
Legion Wing, Veterans Memorial Hall  
1745 Mission Drive, Solvang

While frequently seen in Santa Barbara County, and increasingly found even in urban areas across the country, the coyote remains a mysterious animal with its uncanny night howls, unrivaled ingenuity, and amazing resilience. Dan Flores's most recent and acclaimed book *Coyote America* explores multiple aspects of this ubiquitous

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Photo: Ginger Wadsworth

mammal, *Canis latrans*, including its role in Native American culture as trickster and genius, and its incredible survival story during the last 200 years. Despite many and varied campaigns of annihilation, coyotes didn't just survive, they thrived, expanding across the continent from Anchorage, Alaska, to New York's Central Park.

A *New York Times* bestseller in 2016, *Coyote America* is both an environmental and a deep natural history of the coyote. It traces the five-million-year-long biological story of an animal

that has become the "wolf" in our backyards, as well as its cultural evolution from a preeminent spot in Native American religions to the hapless foil of the Road Runner.

**Dan Flores** is the A. B. Hammond Professor Emeritus of Western History at the University of Montana and the author of ten books and numerous essays and articles on various aspects of western U.S. history, including natural history, environment, art and culture of the West. Professor Flores currently resides in New Mexico.

### Annual Members' Meeting

Saturday, February 11, 6:45 p.m.

Tipton House, UC Sedgwick Reserve  
3566 Brinkerhoff Avenue, Santa Ynez

Immediately preceding the California Oak Studies lecture at Sedgwick Reserve, the annual Members' Meeting will be held at 6:45 p.m., to elect and introduce new board members for 2017, and hear a brief Treasurer's report. Members, please join us in the Tipton House.

### A Trilogy of California Oak Studies: Phylogeny, Phenology, and "Flow-ology"

Free lecture with Victoria Sork and Andy Lentz

Saturday, February 11, 7:00 p.m.

Tipton House, UC Sedgwick Reserve  
3566 Brinkerhoff Avenue, Santa Ynez

As oaks in California face ever-changing threats to their survival, this timely talk will deepen our understanding of their evolutionary history as well as their fragility and potential resilience. Victoria Sork and Andy Lentz will present three related studies illustrating the ecological and evolutionary processes of oaks. The first study uses genetic data to describe the evolutionary relationships (phylogeny) among California white oak species with an emphasis on clarifying the taxonomy of California scrub oaks. The second study describes ten years of observations on the timing of springtime leaf and flower emergence (aka phenology) of *Quercus lobata*, Valley Oak, and the reproductive consequences for acorn production. The last study discusses the flow of acorns and genes ("flow-ology"—our word) through the foraging behavior of acorn woodpeckers and California scrub jays. Collectively, this trilogy highlights the fascinating natural history of California oaks.

Professor **Victoria Sork** is a plant evolutionary and conservation biologist who has studied trees and other organisms in temperate and tropical ecosystems, with a current focus on California oaks. Her research interests include the evolution of local adaptation, plant response to climate, and ecological genomics. She has published more



than 100 articles in major journals and presented at numerous national and international conferences. She has conducted research at UC Sedgwick Reserve since 2000 and produced 36 publications on oaks and lichens with data taken entirely or in part from this locality. Professor Sork is an elected fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the California Academy of Sciences and a dedicated teacher and student mentor. She holds a Ph.D. in Biological Sciences from the University of Michigan–Ann Arbor and BS degree from UC Irvine. Currently, she is Dean of Life Sciences and a Professor with a split appointment in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, and the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA.

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**Andy Lentz** is a research associate who grew up in the Santa Ynez Valley. A graduate of the UCSB Sedgwick Reserve's first docent class in 2000, he has led hundreds of adult and school-age visitors on stimulating and fun natural history tours. He holds a certificate as a California Naturalist. He and Victoria began their ongoing collaboration on the valley oak phenology project in 2007; it has been presented at state and national conferences.



### Harnessing Water & Harvesting Soil: 2,000 Years of Water Harvesting in the Petra Hinterlands

Free lecture with Erin Addison

Thursday, March 2, 7:30 p.m.

Santa Ynez Valley Grange

2374 Alamo Pintado Ave, Los Olivos

**Erin Addison** is an historian and landscape architect who has worked in Jordan since 1994. She began her work in the Middle East as a Fulbright scholar researching the water infrastructure and politics of the Umayyad Caliphate in the 8th century bilad al-sham region. Addison returned to the School of Landscape Architecture at the University of Arizona in 2002 to retool for work on environmentally sustainable development of arid lands. Since 2003, she has consulted on environmental projects throughout Jordan, serving as the senior environmental expert on the award-winning Strategic Masterplan for Petra Region. She will be introducing new and ongoing research on a network of 1st and 2nd century Nabataean water and soil conservation systems at Ba'aja, in the northern Petra Region. The Nabataean agricultural installation has been re-used and adapted over centuries, up to the present day. Addison will also discuss the ways in which water policy and land use reflect the politics of "development" and its relevance for planning and landscape integrity today. Addison is the author of *Documenting Deforestation at Sadd al-Ahmar, Petra Region, Jordan: 1924-2011* (2011).



Double channels carved into the sandstone of the Ba'aja massif both harvest and control runoff onto the agricultural plain below.  
Photo: Erin Addison



A Nabataean period dam on Wadi Ba'aja has been refurbished again and again to the present day, and is still used by the `Ammariin tribe to harvest water for livestock.  
Photo: Erin Addison

### Exploring Mount Dibblee

Field trip with Larry Ballard

Saturday, March 4, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Participation is limited to 25

Advance registration required at [synature@west.net](mailto:synature@west.net) or 805 693-5683

Members free/non-members \$20

This infrequently used trail takes us through a large stand of chaparral on the upper west part of UCSB Sedgwick Reserve. The chaparral is entirely Buckbrush, *Ceanothus cuneatus*, one of the most widely distributed species in the California Floristic Province, and in early spring the plants are often covered in fragrant lavender blossoms. It will take some luck to find the spectacular Ceanothus Silk Moth but this is their peak flight period. Nearer the ground, annual wildflowers are abundant on this trail. After honoring Tom Dibblee on the summit named for him, we'll head northeast to the serpentine grasslands overlooking the west fork of the Figueroa Creek watershed. The hike is about two miles roundtrip with most of the 600' elevation gain on the first part of the trail. Sturdy hiking shoes and long pants are



Photo: John Evarts

required. Bring lunch, water, sun protection, and dress in layers. Hiking poles are recommended as the trail is steep in places and rocky.

**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.

### Carrizo Plain National Monument

Field Trip with Denis Kearns

Saturday, March 18, 9:00 a.m. to about 4:00 p.m.

Participation is limited to 25

Advance registration required at [synature@west.net](mailto:synature@west.net) or 805 693-5683

Members free/non-members \$20

Join us for an adventure in Carrizo Plain National Monument with BLM Botanist Denis Kearns, where we may (depending on rainfall) find acres of spring wildflowers, and will certainly explore the other natural wonders of this remote area, including diverse undisturbed wildlife habitat, incredible views, and fascinating human history.

Bring lunch, lots of water, good sun protection, dress in layers for possible swings in temperature, and wear sturdy hiking shoes. We may cross slippery or rocky areas, so please bring hiking poles if you normally use them. Our hikes probably will not be long, but the terrain may be uneven. There are some facilities in the Monument, but they are widely spaced. Soda Lake Road and the other roads in Carrizo Plain are unimproved dirt; please drive appropriate vehicles. All-wheel drive or 4WD vehicles are encouraged.



Carrizo Plains, spring

Photo: John Evarts

**Denis Kearns** is the field office Botanist for the Bakersfield BLM Field Office, managing public lands from the crest of the Sierra Nevada to the Pacific Ocean in Santa Barbara, Ventura, San Luis Obispo, Kern, Tulare, Kings, Fresno, and Madera Counties, including the Carrizo Plain National Monument. His work includes botanical surveys, vegetation mapping, rare plant monitoring, restoration of degraded habitat (including seed collection), control of invasive plants, and writing environmental documents, among other duties. Denis has a bachelor's degree in Botany from UCSB, a master's from HSU on the reproductive biology in the *Saxifragaceae*, and a Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin on systematics in the *Cucurbitaceae*, the Squash Family.

### Local Spring Wildflower Foray

Field trip with Liz Gaspar

Sunday, April 9, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Participation is limited to 20

Advance registration required at [synature@west.net](mailto:synature@west.net) or 805 693-5683

Members free/nonmembers \$20

We're leaving the location open for this spring wildflower foray; Liz Gaspar will decide our local destination based on the best blooms. Last year, she led us through stunning sheets of flowers along Birabent Canyon hillsides including gillias, lilies, lupine, larkspur, poppies, milkmaids, redmaids, and hundreds more including the rare Santa Barbara Jewelflower, *Caulanthus amplexicaulis* subsp. *barbarae*, and Small-flowered Morning-glory, *Convolvulus simulans*. This year Liz will again 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. Hiking poles are



Photo by John Evarts

recommended as some sections of the trail may be moderately steep.

**Liz Gaspar** was the park naturalist at Cachuma Lake for twenty 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.

### Quiota Creek Birds and Wildflowers

Field trip with Tim Matthews

Saturday, April 22, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Participation is limited to 20

Advance registration required at [synature@west.net](mailto:synature@west.net) or 805 693-5683

Members free/nonmembers \$20

Join Tim Matthews for a springtime field trip to Quiota Creek on the private Mitchell Ranch. Late April to early May is a great time to observe migrating passerines, who congregate along this rare source of running water at the base of the Santa Ynez Mountains' north side. Various warbler species, Lazuli Buntings and Blue Grosbeaks are just a few of the birds we may hear and see. Impressive numbers of native wildflowers and shrubs also bloom on the hillsides and along the cool riparian corridor when there are sufficient winter rains.

Bring binoculars, sun protection, lunch and water, dress in layers and wear good sturdy shoes, such as hiking boots. Trip hiking poles are recommended as some sections of the trail may be moderately steep or rocky.



Above, Quiota Creek, Photo by John Evarts.



Left, Lazuli Bunting singing, photo by Bill Chen.

**Tim Matthews** is the Scientific Aide for California Department of Fish and Wildlife at Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve and has led many field trips for local organizations over the years.

### Mosquitoes and Mosquito-borne Disease in Santa Barbara County

Free lecture with David Chang

Thursday, May 11, 7:00 p.m.

Co-sponsored by Solvang Library

Solvang Library, 1745 Mission Drive

Bzzzz! Are mosquitoes good for anything at all? Join us for a free lecture that will answer many questions, but perhaps not that one. Besides being a nuisance, mosquitoes are a public health pest that can spread diseases to you, your pets and livestock. West Nile encephalitis is a current problem that affects birds, people, and horses. Other potential threats include dengue fever, chikungunya, and Zika. Learn about mosquitoes, the problems they cause, and what to do about them.

**David Chang** is General Manager of the Mosquito and Vector Management District of Santa Barbara County. David has been the general manager of the mosquito district for three years. He is responsible for a crew of six staff that provides mosquito control and surveillance services throughout most of Santa Barbara County, primarily on the south coast. Previously, he worked as a noxious weed management specialist and supervisor at the County of Santa Barbara Agricultural Commissioner's Office. David graduated from San Diego State University with a bachelor's degree in entomology.



Photo courtesy Spencer Pest Control

## Past SYVNHS Programs:

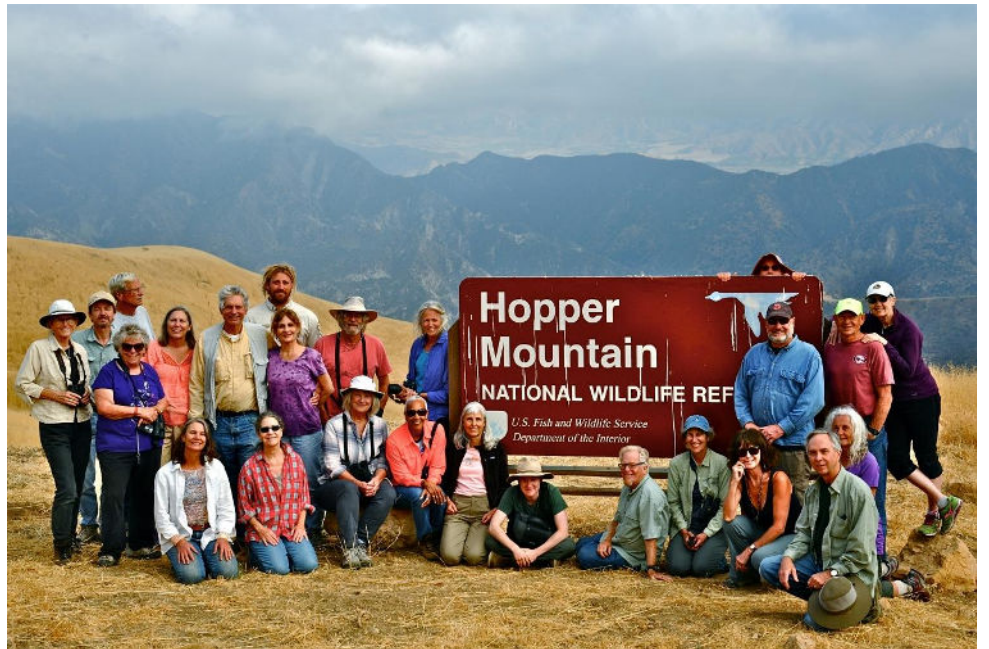


Light and water at Devereux Slough illuminate many birds for SYVNHS members.

Photo by Owen Duncan.

*(Clockwise from upper-right)*

Exploring Hazard Reef at Montaña de Oro, photo by John Evarts; group shot at Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge, photo by John Evarts; Green Heron at Devereux Slough, photo by Owen Duncan; Jan Dependahl explains the Monterey Formation at Hendry's Beach; old structure at Vandenberg AFB, photo by Merrilee Fellows; and Joan Lentz photographs a sea star on the Morro Bay field trip, photo by John Evarts.



# Marc's Stumper

The Santa Ynez Mountains are considered to be part of the Transverse Ranges, one of the few mountain systems in North America that runs mostly east-west rather than north-south. It takes local residents years to learn that they are really looking south, not west, across the ocean towards the Channel Islands. What is the next land you would come to if you kept going past the islands? What other U.S. mountain ranges run east-west? What influence does this unusual local geography have on the natural plant and animal life in the Santa Ynez Mountains and valley?

Here's my photo looking across the pines on San Marcos Pass towards the channel islands beyond. What is the next land beyond the islands?

The pines are worth a stumper of their own! Here are both Coulter Pines (*Pinus coulteri*) and Gray Pines (*Pinus sabiniana*). Are they both native? The Coulters are really being hit by the combination of Bark Beetles and drought, but the Gray Pines seem resistant. Why?

**About last issue's stumper:** Maybe an uncontrolled wildfire could spread until winter rains put it out, but I don't think that was typical in old California. Fire is mostly controlled by other fires. Burned hills become natural firebreaks. Fires burn upwards and tend to become isolated. The fire mosaic of past burns limits the spread of future fires. We've learned the hard way that suppressing fires can make a bad situation worse, increasing fuel loading so the inevitable conflagration becomes unstoppable. Managing wildfire in our local mountains is a huge problem with no easy answer.



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