



MAGPIE CALLS

Newsletter of the Santa Ynez Valley Natural History Society
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From The SYVNHS Board...

By Marc Kummel

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Magpie Calls*, the newsletter of the Santa Ynez Valley Natural History Society! We hope this will provide a better way to stay in touch with members about past field trips and the exciting new offerings we are planning. We hope to publish this newsletter every two months. Look for the next issue – with information about our new Awards program – in November. This is your newsletter. What else would you like to see in these pages?

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We are sending this inaugural issue both in the mail and electronically as a PDF attachment to your email address. The PDFs will also appear on our website at www.synature.org. If you are happy receiving this only as email (with color photos!), please "Reply" to the email. This will help reduce our postage expenses, and it's the green way to go!

Upcoming Lectures and Field Trips

Ethnobotany at UC Sedgwick Reserve

Workshop and Field Trip with Karen Osland
Saturday, September 17, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Advance registration required at
synature@west.net or 693-5683
Members free / nonmembers \$20

Ever wonder what potential uses might be hidden in our wonderful native plants? Is there a colorful dye, perhaps a basket? This workshop and field trip will explore the hidden uses of California native plants found on the Sedgwick Reserve. We'll meet at the Reserve's newly completed Tipton House, where we will spend an hour with a hands-on examination of some of the ways native plants are used. We will then drive a short distance to the

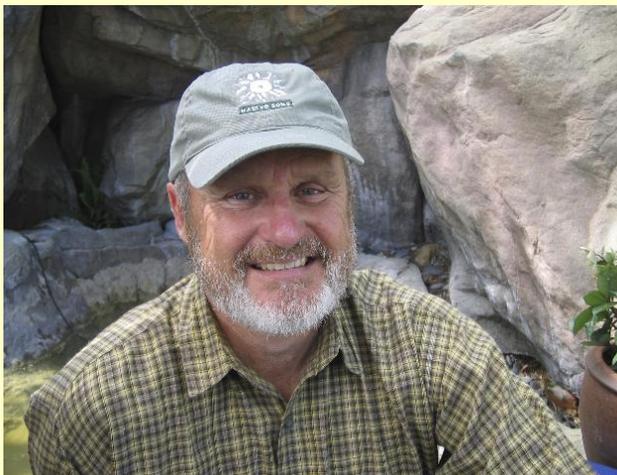
Blue Schist Trail, where a moderate hike will allow us to see some of these plants in the wild. This scenic trail is 2.4 miles in length with an overall elevation gain of 650 feet. Parts of the trail are steep and can be slippery; those with trekking poles will find them useful on this route. Bring water, camera, and sturdy walking shoes or boots.

Karen Osland, a retired environmental planner, is co-owner of Lavenpine Consulting. She has been teaching classes on basketry and the ethnobotany of native California plants for 25 years. She conducts training classes for various docent organizations on Chumash and Gabrielino ethnobotany and leads outreach programs for 3rd to 5th graders on cultural uses of California native plants.

Reimagining the California Lawn

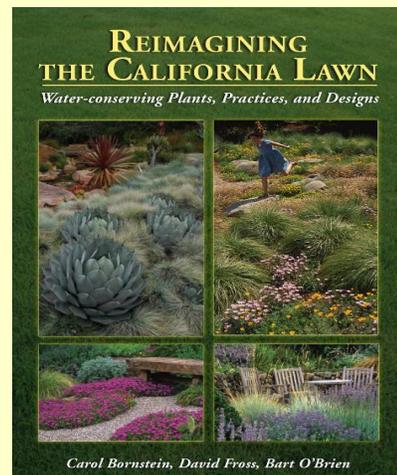
Free Lecture and Book Signing with David Fross
Thursday, September 22, 7:00 p.m.
Solvang Library, 1745 Mission Dr.

Many Californians are seeking innovative ways to beautify their landscapes, attract more birds and butterflies to their gardens, and lower their monthly water bills. To help gardeners achieve these goals, nurseryman, horticulture professor, and photographer David Fross will talk about lawn alternatives ranging from greenswards and meadows to succulent and rock gardens. Following the lecture, he will be signing his latest book,



titled *Reimagining the California Lawn: Water-conserving plants, practices, and designs*.

David Fross is the founder and president of Native Sons Wholesale Nursery in Arroyo Grande, which specializes in plants that are well adapted to California's mediterranean climate. He has been a horticulture instructor at Cal Poly University, San Luis Obispo for 20 years. His previous book, *California Native Plants for the Garden* (co-authored with Carol Bornstein and Bart O'Brien), received the prestigious "Book Award" from the American Horticultural Society.



Santa Ynez River Tour

Field Trip with Matt Stoecker
Saturday, October 1, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
\$20 per person
Call: Holly at 686-8315 for reservations

The Society is partnering with the Wildling Art Museum and the Environmental Defense Center to present a half-day tour and

exploration of the Santa Ynez River. The tour will visit several locations in the middle reaches of the river and a shaded tributary.

Matt Stoecker is a local restoration ecologist who has been focused on restoring wild steelhead and identifying solutions that restore watersheds.

A Californian's Guide to the Trees Among Us

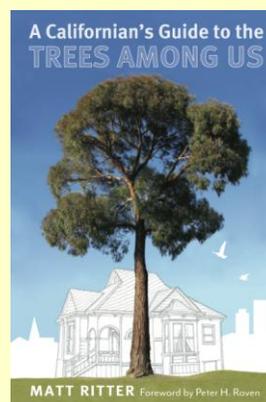
Free Lecture and Book Signing with Matt Ritter
Thursday, October 27, 7:00 p.m.
Solvang Library, 1745 Mission Dr.

California's agreeable mediterranean climate and rich horticultural history have converged to populate our towns and cities with thousands of different species of native and ornamental trees. Join Matt Ritter for a photographic exposé of the lives and stories of some of the fascinating trees



featured in his new book *A Californian's Guide to the Trees Among Us*. Following his talk, he will be signing this natural history and identification guide to urban and suburban trees in California.

Dr. Matt Ritter studies cultivated trees and trees that escape cultivation. He is currently a botany professor in the Biological Sciences Department at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and director of the plant conservatory there.



Plant Sale at Manzanita Nursery

A Benefit for the SYVNHS
Saturday, October 29, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
880 Chalk Hill Road, Solvang

You can find a great selection of native plants, support a local business, and raise money for the SYV Natural History Society all at the same time by shopping at Manzanita Nursery on Saturday, October 30. The nursery owners, Ron and Diane

Baron Ranch Loop Trail

Field trip with Tim Matthews
Saturday, November 5, 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Advance registration required at synature@west.net
or 693-5683
Members free / nonmembers \$20

The Baron Ranch was purchased by Santa Barbara County in 1991 and was recently opened to the public for hiking three days per week. Located on the Gaviota Coast, this 1,092-acre working ranch

Griffin, are long-time members of the society and will donate a generous percentage of all their sales on that day to the Society. Late Fall is an ideal time to plant, and Manzanita Nursery will have a broad of California natives and other water-wise plants available to choose from. The society will help staff this event, and there will be experienced horticulturalists on hand to answer your questions throughout the day.

includes 107 acres of avocados and cherimoyas. We begin the hike by following Arroyo Quemada Creek and then head up the mountain for a loop with fantastic coastal vistas. The total length of this moderate hike is 6 miles.

Tim Matthews is a life-long naturalist and conservationist. He has led trips in the past for the Santa Ynez Valley Natural History Society, U.S.F.S., and the Audubon Society.

Gophers Rule the World!

Free Lecture with Polly Schiffman

Wednesday, November 16, 7:00 p.m.

Solvang Library, 1745 Mission Dr.

In 1579, the British explorer and pirate Sir Francis Drake wrote in his diary about the remarkable abundance of burrowing rodents in California. A few centuries later, in 1923, the great vertebrate zoologist Joseph Grinnell estimated that one billion burrowing rodents lived within California's borders. Although the state's wildlands have suffered greatly since these historical observations were made,

burrowing rodents persist in considerable numbers and act as ecosystem engineers, exerting tremendous control over plant communities and ecosystem processes. This presentation will review fun facts and natural history about gophers and their ilk.

Dr. Polly Schiffman is a biology professor at California State University, Northridge. She is a plant ecologist who, among other things, is interested in how the activities of small burrowing mammals affect vegetation in California. She teaches courses on evolution, conservation biology, and plant ecology.



Manzana Creek Hike

Field Trip with Ben Munger

Saturday, December 3, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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

Members free / nonmembers \$20

Our annual fall-color trip will follow Manzanita Creek's riparian corridor downstream from Nira to Horseshoe Bend and back, for a total of about 7.5 miles roundtrip. The hike entails a very modest elevation gain on the return. Chaparral ecology and the human

history in the area will be the interpretive focus of this trip. We will meet at the Santa Ynez Park & Ride on Highway 246 at 8:00 a.m. This great hike was rained out last year, so we'll try again!

Ben Munger has been exploring Manzanita Creek since 1967, when he would stay at the historic Dabney Cabin (then leased by Midland School) or with the Cody family. A former archeologist with the Los Padres National Forest, he is now the ranch and farm manager at Midland School.

Past Field Trips



(Top left) Liz Gaspar (in green shirt) assembles the group on a foggy morning to hike down the Arroyo Burro trail. (Upper right) Following the little-used Ranger Peak Trail to Chert Butte with Suzie Bartz and Larry Ballard. (Middle right) Larry Ballard points out unusual leather oak (*Quercus durata*) along the trail. This is one of about 250 species endemic to serpentine soils in California. (Lower left) Sally Issacson introduces the group to Cuyama Valley wildflowers. (Lower right) Diane Siegal (center) and Laura Baldwin examine the flower structures on *Rumex hymenosepalus*, a native relative of the European weed, curly dock. (Photos by John Evarts.)



Marc's Stumper

I have been getting new photos of interesting flies, bees, and butterflies in the garden and woods, but I'm starting to get more and more photos of spiders and other predators preying on the pollinators. The seasons are a-changing. We still have our noisy cricket chorus at night, but all the summer butterflies and bees and pesky flies and other insects that delight and bedevil us – they mostly go unnoticed – will soon disappear for winter. Sure, the insects will be back next summer, and I'll be waiting with camera and flyswatter. How do all these little critters survive over the winter? How do they get from *now* to *then*?

(Photo left) This is not a butterfly! It's a Snowberry Clearwing Moth (*Hemaris diffinis*) on flowers of native Mustang Mint (*Monardella lanceolata*) in the mint family. (Photo right) This is not a yellowjacket wasp! It's a Syrphid Flower Fly, maybe *Spilomyia interrupta* or kin. Photos by Marc Kummel.

Marc Kummel will post a new stumper here in every issue of *Magpie Calls* that involves local natural history. Email your answers to Marc at mkummel@rain.org.

Marc has served on the SVYNHS Board of Directors for many years. He crafted science stumpers for the Dunn Middle School newsletter for 15 years before his recent retirement. Marc posts his local natural history photos nearly every day at: www.fotolog.com/treebeard.



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