



# 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.*

## Thank you Treebeard

by John Evarts, on behalf of the Board of Directors

In January 2012, members of the Society were mailed the first issue of *Magpie Calls: Newsletter of the Santa Ynez Valley Natural History Society*. After 11 years of receiving notices of our programs in a somewhat minimalist format, we had our first “real” newsletter for the Society! It featured some fresh formatting, nice typography, and photos scattered throughout the text (color in the digital version!). The newsletter’s name, *Magpie Calls*, was the idea of Marc Kummel, who, after serving eight years on the SYVNHS Board of Directors, offered to take on the task of upgrading and expanding the newsletter and serving as its editor.

A unique feature of the new *Magpie Calls* was titled “Marc’s Stumper.” Marc had crafted science stumpers for the newsletter at Dunn Middle School, where he taught for many years. And so Marc’s Stumper found a new home on the back page of *Magpie Calls*, where it has been part of our newsletter since that first issue. In his Stumper, Marc would usually give readers a thumbnail background on a natural

### Upcoming SYVNHS Lectures and Field Trips

- Sep. 8 Skulls and Skins of Local Animals (workshop)
- Sep. 27 Fire and Southern California’s Sky Islands (lecture)
- Oct. 18 Birds of the Channel Islands (lecture)
- Oct. 20 Greater Devereux Slough Ecosystem (field trip)
- Nov. 4 The Volcanic Landscape at Avila Beach (field trip)
- Nov. 15 The Return of Gray Wolves to California (lecture)
- Nov. 28 California Plants: A Look at our Iconic Flora (lecture)
- Dec. 2 Natural History of Arroyo Hondo Preserve (field trip)
- Dec. 29 Trees of UCSB Series (field trip)

history subject, and then ask a question about that topic. The answer to that issue’s Stumper was always published in the next edition. The questions in “Marc’s Stumper” reflect his inquisitive mind and wide-ranging interests in the natural world. “Could we have a full-on Hurricane here in Central California, and what does this tell us about the Earth?” read one. Or this head-scratcher: “All insects and

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## Upcoming Lectures and Field Trips

### Skulls and Skins of Local Animals

Workshop for ages 6 and up with Tim Matthews  
Saturday, September 8, 10:30 a.m. to noon  
Solvang Library  
1745 Mission Drive, Solvang

Young people and families who are interested in wildlife are invited to see a variety animal skulls, skins, and mounts from the private collection of local naturalist Tim Matthews. He will share his collection of animal skulls and give pointers on how to identify skulls, both in the field and by using guidebooks. In addition, there will be mammal and reptile

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Tim Matthews, photo by John Evarts

skins, along with mounted game bird specimens to examine. Tim will try to answer all your animal questions during this casual drop-in workshop.

**Tim Matthews** is an active birder, fisherman, and hunter who

leads natural history field trips for the SYVNHS and other organizations, such as Sedgwick Reserve. A long-time valley resident, he is currently a Scientific Aide for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife at the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve near Lompoc.

### Fire Management and the Future of Southern California's Sky Islands

Lecture with Professor Samuel Sweet

Co-hosted by the Solvang Library

Thursday, September 27, 7:00 p.m.

Solvang Library

1745 Mission Drive, Solvang

Southwestern California contains a number of "sky islands" — ridgelines and mountaintops that trap moisture and still provide conditions that support isolated relict coniferous forests and plant communities with high levels of biodiversity. In our area, small examples of sky island habitat can be found on Figueroa Mountain and Ranger Peak. Direct evidence of fires was actually lacking in these sites until recently, but changes in fire origins and fire management in the last decade or so have created a crisis whereby some of California's most spectacular sky islands have been lost and the remainder are under severe threat. A decade after the catastrophic Day and Zaca fires, conifers have completely failed to recruit because conditions are now too hot and dry, and these sites will continue as chaparral for thousands of years until the next glacial cycle. This lecture will focus on the few remaining sky islands to illustrate what is being lost. The talk will also examine how current fire-management strategies need to change in order to better protect these imperiled places.

**Dr. Samuel Sweet** is a Professor at UCSB's Department of Ecology, Evolution and Marine Biology. His research focus is on distributional ecology and systematics of western North American and Australian amphibians and reptiles.



Botanical diversity near Figueroa Mountain, photo by Liz Gaspar

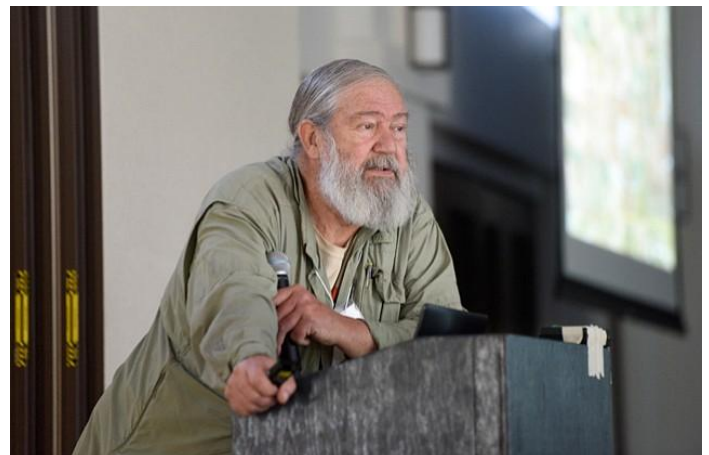


Photo courtesy of Sam Sweet

**Birds of the Channel Islands**

Lecture with Paul Collins

Co-hosted by the Solvang Library

Thursday, October 18, 7:00 p.m.

Solvang Library

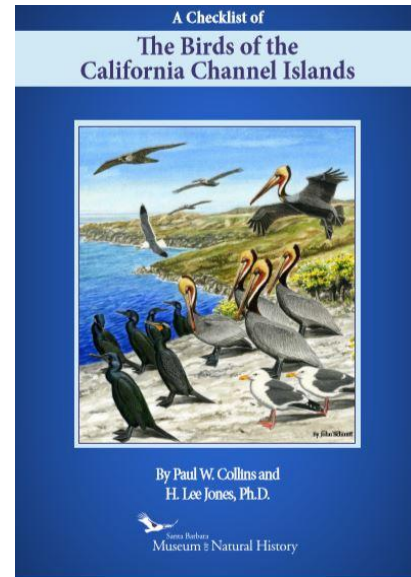
1745 Mission Drive, Solvang

The California Channel Islands, an eight-island archipelago off the coast of Southern California, hosts at least 433 species of birds, both native and nonnative. This talk will provide a visual tour and overview of the islands' rich avifauna. We will learn about an array of birds, ranging from the bald eagle, which has made an amazing human-assisted recovery on several islands, to the island scrub jay, the only island endemic bird species in North America. The recently published *Checklist of the Birds of the California Channel Islands* by Paul W. Collins and H. Lee Jones will be available for purchase.

**Paul Collins** is the Curator of Vertebrate Zoology at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, where he has worked for the past 45 years. He is one of the nation's leading experts on the animal life of the Channel Islands and has spent more than 40 years studying the island's birds and other fauna through his work for the museum, National Park Service, Nature Conservancy, and other agencies involved with the biota of the Channel Islands.



Photo courtesy of Paul Collins

**Restoration and the Greater Devereux Slough Ecosystem**

Field Trip with Lisa Stratton and Mark Holmgren

Saturday, October 20, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Participation is limited to 25

Advance registration begins September 20 at

synature@west.net or 805 / 693-5683

Members \$10 / Non-members \$25 / Children \$5

This trip will explore the Greater Devereux Slough ecosystem, a coastal estuary on the south coast. It has been designated by National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area, based on its global importance to bird populations. The lower Devereux Slough is part of the Coal Oil Point UC Reserve. The upper Devereux Slough was

bulldozed and filled in the 1960s to create a golf course. In 2014, it was purchased by The Nature Conservancy and UCSB and turned over to UCSB. Last winter, a massive restoration project began to restore the historical conditions of the upper slough and adjacent mesa. This exciting project continues and is southern California's largest active restoration effort. We will have the opportunity to tour the restoration and see many of our region's winter shorebirds and other coastal species as we explore the wetlands, beach strand, dunes, salt marsh, and upper reaches of the diverse habitats surrounding the estuary.

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**Lisa Stratton** has managed UCSB's restoration projects and open space since 2005. Lisa earned her PhD in 1997 in Botany and Conservation Biology from the University of Hawaii Manoa. She has also worked on Catalina Island, Hawaii, and in East Africa. Lisa is particularly interested in restoration on the urban fringe where it can provide ecosystem services and support wildlife. Working at CCBER, the Cheadle Center for Biodiversity & Ecological Restoration, has enabled her and her team to provide hands-on opportunities for multiple generations of students to appreciate California's natural heritage.

From 1984 to 2010, **Mark Holmgren** served as Curator of the Vertebrate Collections at the Museum of Systematics and Ecology, now the Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration. In his retirement, Mark coordinates citizen-assisted natural resource projects to improve information available on animal populations in Santa Barbara

County. He oversees the Santa Barbara Breeding Bird Study, a project sponsored by CCBER and accessed at the SB Audubon Society website.



Devereux Slough view toward the mountains, photo by John Evarts

### The Volcanic Landscape at Avila Beach and Vicinity

Field Trip with Susie Bartz, Tanya Atwater, and Larry Ballard  
Sunday, November 4, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Advance registration begins October 4 at [synature@west.net](mailto:synature@west.net) or 805/693-5683

Members \$10 / Non-members \$25 / Children \$5

A low tide will allow us to explore the world-class "pillow" lavas exposed at Avila Beach, where tectonic pressures have slammed parts of an ancient mid-ocean ridge against the coast. Beyond the lavas is a little beach for resting and viewing the side aspect of the exposure, where we'll look for parts of a classic ophiolite sequence. For contrast, we'll also see the much younger and highly varied rocks of the Obispo Formation at the down-coast end of the beach, as well as discuss the submarine volcanics and the Avila landscape.

The walk on the lava exposure is short but difficult and very uneven, so good balance and sturdy hiking boots are necessary. We also suggest you bring binoculars, as California sea lions, harbor seals, sea otters, and black oystercatchers are often seen along the edge of the bay.

**Susie Bartz** is a geology educator who 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. **Tanya Atwater** is professor emerita at UCSB. She is



Pillow lavas at Avila Beach, photo by John Evarts

especially well known for her works on the plate tectonic history of western North America and the San Andreas Fault system. **Larry Ballard** is a naturalist with a focus on botany and has been a field trip leader for the Society and other organizations for two decades.

## The Return of Gray Wolves to California

Lecture with Pamela Flick

Co-hosted by the Los Olivos Library

Thursday, November 15, 7:30 p.m.

Los Olivos Community Organization Hall (formerly Santa Ynez Valley Grange)

2374 Alamo Pintado Avenue, Los Olivos

Once common throughout much of North America, the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) was driven to localized extinction in most areas of the contiguous United States by the mid-1930s through bounties and wildly successful predator control efforts. The last wild gray wolf in California was shot in Lassen County in 1924.

Flash forward to late December 2011, when a young male wolf known as OR-7 entered our state from Oregon, making him the first known wild wolf in the Golden State in nearly 90 years. In Summer 2015, news rapidly spread that California's first resident wolf family, dubbed the Shasta Pack for the massive dormant volcano near where they were discovered, had settled into eastern Siskiyou County. Just last summer, we learned about the Lassen Pack and their pups. Now we know that at least 18 different wolves have traversed northern California since late 2011. Wolves are no longer merely passing through; they're settling in and making themselves at home here in our state.

This presentation will provide an overview of gray wolf natural history, ecological role, and current distribution and population in North America and here in California. The historic reintroduction efforts in the northern Rockies to bring wolves back from the brink of extinction will be discussed, as will implications for wolf recovery in the western states with an emphasis on the importance of coexistence and moving beyond myths.

**Pamela Flick** is Senior California Representative for Defenders of Wildlife based in Sacramento, where she works on federal land management focused on Sierra Nevada national forests and advancing conservation of carnivores, birds, and amphibians. She is a founding steering committee member of the Pacific Wolf Coalition and was an active participant of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Wolf Stakeholder Working Group convened to help shape a plan for conserving and managing wolves as they recolonize their historical habitat in our state. Prior to joining Defenders in 2005, Pam worked for eight years to protect public lands and rivers with the California Wild Heritage Campaign, the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign, and Friends of the River. She is a third-generation California native and hails from Mariposa.



Gray Wolf in the Shoshone National Forest, photo by Amy Gerber



Photo courtesy of Pamela Flick



**California Plants: A Look at our Iconic Flora**

Lecture and book signing with Matt Ritter

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

Wednesday, November 28, 7:00 p.m.

Los Olivos Community Organization Hall (formerly Santa Ynez Valley Grange)

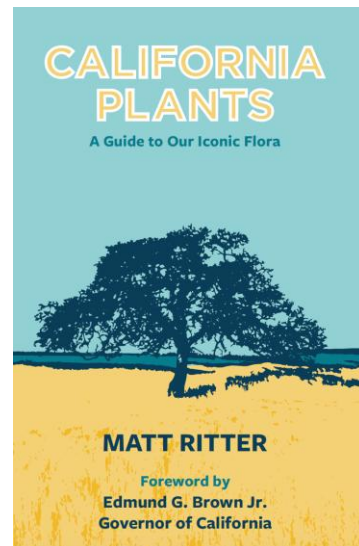
2374 Alamo Pintado Avenue, Los Olivos

There are more than 5,000 native plant species in California—nearly one third of which are now rare or endangered. Matt Ritter, professor of botany at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, seeks to raise awareness of our state's unique botanical beauty with his new book, *California Plants: A Guide to our Iconic Flora*. Matt uses a straightforward, approachable style to celebrate the state's flora and natural areas. During his lecture, he will share photos and stories about some of the fascinating species included in his new field guide. Matt will be available to sign copies of his new book after his talk.

**Dr. Matt Ritter** is a botany professor in the Biological Sciences Department at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, where he studies California's native plants and cultivated trees. He's the author of several books, including *A Californian's Guide to the Trees among Us* (Heyday, 2011). He won the Cal Poly Excellence in Teaching Award and the International Society of Arboriculture Award for Excellence in Education. He's an avid woodworker, mason, and gardener.



Photo courtesy of Matt Ritter

**Natural History of Arroyo Hondo Preserve**

Field Trip with Sally Isaacson and John Warner

Sunday, December 2, 9:00 a.m. to noon

Advance registration begins November 2 at [synature@west.net](mailto:synature@west.net) or 805 / 693-5683

Members \$10 / Non-members \$25 / Children \$5

With its lush riparian corridor, rich variety of plant and animal life, and distinctive layers of geologic formations, it is little wonder that Arroyo Hondo Preserve is known as the jewel of the Gaviota Coast. This field trip will begin with a moderate two-hour hike to learn about the natural history of this 782-acre preserve, which is owned by the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County. The hike will be led by long-time Santa Barbara County botanist and nature educator, Sally Isaacson. After the hike, participants are invited to stay for a short tour of some of the habitat restoration projects on the preserve, led by John Warner, who has been raising native plants for Arroyo Hondo for over 14 years.

Everyone is welcome to stay after the hike and tour for further exploration or to bring a lunch to enjoy in the picnic area. The preserve closes at 3:00 p.m. Trekking poles are suggested for the hike, as there are stream crossings. Fall color should be peaking in the canyon, so photographers may want to carry a camera.

**Sally Isaacson** is the Coordinator for Volunteers at Arroyo Hondo and has lived and ranched in the Gaviota Coast region for more than 45 years. Before coming to Arroyo Hondo, Sally was the Director of Education at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, where she worked for over 20 years. **John Warner** is co-owner of Santa Barbara Natives, a wholesale nursery that specializes in California native plants. John and his wife Jennifer have been the Stewards at Arroyo Hondo since 2005.

**Trees of UCSB Series: A Walking Tour of Six Continents**

Field Trip with Larry Ballard

Saturday, December 29, 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Participation is limited to 25.

Advance registration begins November 29 at

synature@west.net or 805 / 693-5683.

This field trip is free.

UCSB has more than 250 tree species from six continents growing on campus. This walking tour will take a look at the architecture of trees, discuss identification tips, and serve as an introduction to the urban trees of the Santa Barbara area. Along with many common trees we'll see ribbon gum, firewheel tree, coast banksia, mallet flower, guadalupe palm, and primrose tree. Dr. Vernon Cheadle was Chancellor of UCSB (1962-1977), and oversaw the planting of many of these trees in order to create an outdoor teaching environment as well as a beautiful campus. The Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration is a continuation of his botanical legacy.



African tulip tree, photo by Matt Ritter

**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.

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**Thank you Treebeard** *(Continued from page 1)*

spiders have an exoskeleton, like a suit of armor. So how can these critters move when their muscles can only attach on the inside of their external frame?"

Like many of our board members, Marc has worn a variety of hats in his volunteer service to the Society. He calmly managed our sometimes freewheeling board meetings as President for three years. He often helped set up our audio-visual equipment for meetings. He led field trips to the upper Santa Ynez River and West Camino Cielo. He gave a memorable lecture with his fantastic images and knowledge of oak galls. He shared his passion and skill as a photographer in leading a workshop during our 10th anniversary celebration. Similar to many long-time members of the Society, he freely shared his expertise in natural history, whether it

was in regard to mushrooms, wildflowers, or insects—one of Marc's special interests. I urge you to visit Marc's website at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/treebeard/> to sample some of his stunning macrophotography. There are nearly 11,000 images from his 40 years of photographing the flora and fauna near his home on San Marcos Pass!

After nearly seven years as editor of *Magpie Calls*, Marc is calling this his last issue as editor. Twice a year, he has dropped everything to produce *Magpie Calls* on a very short deadline, and managed to do this with good spirits, even as we asked him to keep inserting our last-minute changes.

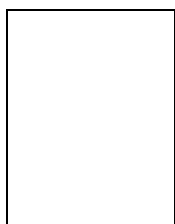
So, we tip our hat to a great naturalist and extend our deepest appreciation to Marc for his work as *Magpie Calls* editor and his other contributions to the Society.

## Marc's Stumper

With our typical *Mediterranean climate*, we expect cool wet winters and hot dry summers. Spring is wildflower time, but I probably spend more time photographing flowers in the summer. Despite six months of summer drought every year, I manage to find interesting and sometimes beautiful wildflowers in the local mountains all summer long. I show just a few examples below. What benefits do these late bloomers get from flowering during our harsh summer drought, long after the spring wildflowers are done? Why do they bother?

**About last issue's stumper:** Ocean waves can be bent, focused and blocked, and they interact just like sound and light waves. You can hear a noise around a corner because of *diffraction*, and I think that's the reason why Santa Barbara beaches get winter waves. Lines of waves can wrap around a point break like Campus Point or the Sandspit, and they also wrap around large features like Point Conception to bring winter waves to the channel. Swells become surf in shallow water, so shallow features like points, coves, reefs, and underwater canyons also make a difference.

Here are a few of the native summer flowers that grow in the Santa Ynez Mountains: Late-flowered Mariposa Lily (*Calochortus fimbriatus*), California Fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*), and Fort Tejon Milk-Aster (*Stephanomeria cichoriacea*). There are many more!



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