



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*

President's Message from Marion Schlinger

Being nominated and elected as president of our SYVNHS in February is quite an honor. Outgoing president John Evarts did an incredible job leading the Society these past two years as well as from the very beginning as one of the founders of the Santa Ynez Valley Natural History Society. Thank you, John, for all you have done over the past 21 years.

I've been on the board of directors since 2015, but historically I was one of the charter members at the inception of this great organization. Having always had an interest in natural history, biology, and botany as an undergraduate, I ended up studying entomology in graduate school at UCB. In general, I just love being outside in nature and observing the birds, plants, animals, and the seasonality of it all. I think our whole pandemic situation has given me the opportunity to be even more observant outside on my long walks and hikes. I hope many of you have been able to get out for fresh air and a nature fix over the past 18 months.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, we were able to continue bringing information on the natural world around us into your homes through our Zoom/Webinar license. Through the goodness and willingness of many researchers and naturalists in the scientific community, we have been able to present their research findings and knowledge. Since May 2020 we have had 11 presentations with topics ranging from crickets to ancient comets, snowy plovers, tiger salamanders, sea stars, evolution of stone tools, and vultures to name a few.

And as restrictions were being lifted, we successfully offered a few members-only field trips in late spring in keeping with Covid protocols and limiting the number of participants to 10. We also invested in a portable sound system for use on

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Santa Ynez Valley. Photo by John Evarts.

field trips to allow distancing with a transmitter for the leader and individual easy-to-use receivers for participants (who can be up to 100 feet away). We are looking forward to using this system this fall, particularly on upcoming beach field trips. And speaking of fall, we have many events lined up now through December, including Zoom/Webinar lectures and several field trips. We may also be offering one or two "pop-up" events that will be posted on our website, but that are not included in Magpie Calls. Details on all our events can be found here in the Newsletter and on our website, www.syvnature.org.

I realize that many of you miss our in-person lectures, but there are many pluses to using an online format. For one, we can have presenters who are not local and would not have been available to us otherwise. Another consideration is that some members do not drive at night, or they live in Santa Barbara or out of the Santa Ynez Valley, and do not want to drive here. They would miss out, but now we can all put our feet up and relax and enjoy the presentations. When we do live lectures again, we are looking into how we can record the presentations and have them available

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on our website.

Thanks are due to board member Jim Patin, who has helped us change email providers so our new email address is now: syvnhs@syvnature.org. He also set up the board members with email addresses at syvnature.org so we can communicate without our board business emails getting lost in the clutter of personal emails. Thank you, Jim, for all your technical wizardry.

I would like to mention in closing that many of you may remember Lyanda Haupt's in-person engaging presentation out at Sedgwick Reserve in

2019 on her book *Mozart's Starling* and her stories of her own pet starling, Carmen. We also got to briefly meet Carmen in Lyanda's Zoom/Webinar presentation this past April previewing her newest book, *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature and Spirit*. I am very sorry to share with you the sad news that Carmen died recently at seven years of age. If you haven't read *Mozart's Starling*, it is a fun and interesting read.

Finally, thank you members for your continuing support and contributions.

Fall Programs

Saturday, August 28: A Field Trip to the Vineyard

Field trip with vintner Tim Gorham

Saturday, August 28, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Participation is limited to 15. Advance registration opened at 9:00 a.m. for Members on August 21 and on August 24 for Nonmembers at syvnhs@syvnature.org or 805/693-5683.

Members \$10 / Nonmembers \$25

Masks are optional for those who have been vaccinated.

Vintner Tim Gorham will give a presentation on geology and viticulture of the Santa Ynez Valley, with a focus on the Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara County, AVA (American Viticulture Area). The visit to the vineyard will include an outdoor presentation in a shaded courtyard and a walk through Tim's vineyard in Santa Ynez as well as a short visit to a nearby geologic outcrop, followed by a small wine tasting. Tim will also provide a handout that includes an outline of the talk; geologic cross-sections and maps; soil chemistry charts; and a table of climate data from other Cabernet growing regions of the world.

The field trip discussions will include the following in order:

Regional geology of the Santa Ynez Basin

- Regional tectonics and sedimentation using USGS Quadrangle Maps from T. Dibblee

Vineyards of the Santa Ynez Valley (in handout)

- Emphasizing the Happy Canyon of SB AVA

Gorham Vineyards

- A walk through our Cabernet vineyard with discussions about the local "terroir" including soil composition and chemistry, climate, and growing environment
- A short walk (1/2 mi) down Baseline Road to look at an excellent road cut exposure of local vineyard soils

Discussion of worldwide Cabernet Sauvignon growing regions with specific climate comparisons

Tim Gorham and his wife Susan Cobb live in the Happy Canyon area of the Santa Ynez Valley and have been farming a one-acre vineyard of Cabernet Sauvignon for 15 years. Tim has a bachelor's degree in geology from the University of Colorado and a master's degree in geology from the University of New Mexico. His graduate studies specialized in sedimentary geology. Tim worked in the energy business with Exxon-Mobil for 15 years and as a geologic consultant until moving to the Santa Ynez Valley in 2004.



Top: Tim Gorham at the vineyard. Photo by Jim Patin.
Bottom: Display of Dibblee geology maps of the Valley. Photo by Jim Patin.

**The Monterey Formation at Gaviota Beach East
Field trip with Sabina Thomas**

Sunday, October 17, 2:00 to 4:30 p.m.

Participation is limited to 18. Advance registration opens at 9:00 a.m. on September 17 for Members and on October 7 for Nonmembers at syvnhs@syvnature.org or 805/693-5683.

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

Masks are optional for those who have been vaccinated.

The Monterey Formation defined the coastline in Santa Barbara and is a constant companion when we walk along



Monterey Formation at Gaviota Beach East. Photo by Sabina Thomas.

the beach. It is also beautifully exposed in the high cliffs at Gaviota State Beach and displays an impressive array of weathering in addition to deformational features. If we are lucky, we'll find some whale fossils, too. This field trip also serves as a warm-up for Susie Bartz's exploration of Gaviota Beach West which is planned for December 4.

Special instructions: We will be walking along the beach and crossing a small tidal channel—be prepared to get wet feet. Other than that, it's just a walk along the beach! Bring sun protection and some warm clothing—it often is windy!

Sabina Thomas teaches at Santa Barbara City College and works as a Nature Education Manager at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. She is a transplant from Germany.



Right: Geologist Sabina Thomas.
Photo courtesy of the speaker.

**Cosponsorship: Sedgwick Reserve Walking Ecology
Series Webinars**

Webinar presentation with Sandy DeSimone

Thursday, November 4, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

The Santa Ynez Valley Natural History Society is cosponsoring the webinar (below) in the Sedgwick Walking Ecology Series 2021-22: "What's Special About Coastal Sage Scrub"

This Zoom webinar includes a live presentation followed by a Q & A. Register for this webinar at https://ucsb.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_CHvWQhhsT-ON5gRE69zDrQ. A recording of the presentation will be posted online after the event.

Sandy DeSimone is Director of Research & Education at the Audubon California Starr Ranch Sanctuary. She will discuss restoration of coastal sage scrub in her presentation, *Use of songbirds and other observable wildlife as metrics for selective acceptance of non-natives in restoration of grassland, coastal sage scrub and riparian woodland.*



Coastal sage scrub at Starr Ranch. Photo by Justin Meissen.

Trees of Solvang's Urban Forest

Field Trip with Larry Ballard

Sunday, November 7, 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Participation is limited to 15. Advance registration opens at 9:00 a.m. on October 7 for Members and on October 28 for Nonmembers at syvnhs@syvnature.org or 805/ 693-5683.

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

Masks are optional for those who have been vaccinated.

Solvang is home to a diversity of native and imported trees that are found in both residential and commercial neighborhoods. We'll explore this urban forest on a casual two-mile city walk that will allow us to visit a variety of arboreal species originating from California to around the globe. We'll see some outstanding specimens of trees that are native to the Santa Ynez Valley, such as sycamore and valley oak and also view other California natives, such as Torrey pine, an extremely rare conifer. The trip will also



California sycamores at the entrance to Solvang's Veteran's Hall.
Photo by John Evarts.

include an introduction to a selection of Solvang's exotic trees, such as Ginkgos — one of Earth's oldest tree species and a survivor from the time of the dinosaurs. With any luck, some of Solvang's deciduous trees will be displaying their fall color.

Dress in layers and wear sturdy but comfortable shoes for urban walking. Recommended reading to prepare for the trip is, *A Californian's Guide to the Trees Among Us* by Matt Ritter, who has lectured for the Society in past years.

Your trip leader is **Larry Ballard**, who has offered past tours of the famous collection of trees on the campus of UCSB, as well as educational walks to introduce the trees of valley communities, including Los Olivos, Santa Ynez, and Solvang. Larry 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.



Above: Cork oak with its distinctive spongy bark that is used for making corks.
Photo by John Evarts.

Left: Valley oak near the intersection of First and Oak streets in Solvang. Photo by John Evarts.

Smokey the Beaver: Can Beavers Prevent Wildfires?

Online presentation with Dr. Emily Fairfax

Wednesday, November 17, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

This Zoom webinar includes a live presentation followed by a Q & A. A Zoom link will be emailed to SYVNHS members and posted online prior to the program. A recording of the presentation will be posted online after the event.

Beavers are native to California—from the high Sierra all the way down to the coast. Beaver dams also play a key role in protecting ecosystems during drought and in regulating the spread of wildfire. Unfortunately, the European fur trade decimated their populations, and by the early 1900s very few beavers remained in California. Today, beaver populations are on the rebound—just in time to help us deal with increasingly intense wildfire seasons. Thanks



Beaver photo by Jean Beaufort, public domain.

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to recent conservation initiatives, we may start seeing a lot more beaver dams in our local watersheds—including in and around the Santa Ynez River. So what exactly do beavers do, how do they protect us from wildfire, and what is the current state of beaver policy in California? Come to this talk and find out—it'll be a *dam* good time!



Beaver dam in Atascadero. Photo by Emily Fairfax.

Dr. Emily Fairfax is an Assistant Professor of Environmental Science and Resource Management at CSU Channel Islands. She earned a PhD in Geological Sciences from the University of Colorado Boulder. Dr. Fairfax uses both remote sensing and field work to understand how beaver activity can create drought and fire-resistant patches in the landscape under a changing climate. Her colleagues and students are not kidding when they say Dr. Fairfax can talk about beavers all day.



Dr. Emily Fairfax examining a beaver chew in the Santa Ynez Valley. Photo courtesy of the speaker.

Gullies, the “Taco-cline,” and other Geologic features of Gaviota Beach West

Field Trip with Susie Bartz

Saturday, December 4, 1:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Participation is limited to 15. Advance registration opens at 9:00 a.m. on November 4 for Members and on November 24 for Nonmembers at synhs@synnature.org or 805/693-5683.

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

Masks are optional for those who have been vaccinated.

A very low tide on the afternoon of December 4 will allow access to the strange, black outcrops just west of the historic wharf at Gaviota State Beach. These features, known as the Gaviota gullies, offer both caves and tarry outcrops loaded with rocks from highland and submarine origins. In addition, we'll examine cliff faces near the Gullies that show arches, wavy “Moguls,” and a fold we have dubbed the “Taco-cline.”

We'll meet at the Gaviota State Beach parking lot (day use fee is required) below the train trestle at 1:30 p.m. This will allow us ample time to enjoy the estuary (birding!) and the chance to explore some other interesting geologic features en route to the Gullies. If there is extra time, we can do some tide-pooling. Dress in layers and expect that your

shoes may get wet as we round some small headlands. This trip will cover about two miles of walking, mostly on firm sand. Beach conditions may change, and registrants will be updated before the trip.

Susie Bartz has worked for over 20 years with schools and community organizations to bring awareness of earth science to the general public. She helped publish the maps of her late friend and mentor, the legendary geologist Tom Dibblee. She is a popular field trip leader for many non-profits, including the Society, and has recently been leading trips for the public at the San Marcos Foothills, hosted by Channel Islands Restoration.



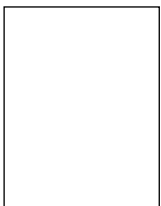
Right: Examining the cliffs near the Gaviota gullies. Photo by John Evarts.

Upcoming SYVNHS Webinars and Field Trips

- Aug. 28 A Field Trip to the Vineyard
Oct. 17 Monterey Formation at Gaviota Beach East: Field trip
Nov. 4 Coastal Sage Scrub: Webinar cosponsorship with
Sedgwick Reserve
Nov. 7 Trees of Solvang's Urban Forest: Field trip
Nov. 17 Can Beavers Prevent Wildfires?: Webinar
Dec. 4 Geologic Features of Gaviota Beach West: Field trip
"Pop-Ups" Short-notice additional events will be posted on the
website and emails will be sent to our members and friends.



Grass Mountain in fall. Photo by John Evarts.



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