

# MAGPIE CALLS

Newsletter of the Santa Ynez Valley Natural History Society  
PO Box 794, Los Olivos, CA 93441  
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*Dedicated to the study, exploration, and appreciation of natural history  
in the Santa Ynez Valley region*

## Why Keep a Nature Journal, or TIL (Today I Learned)

Two parallel nature journaling workshops, one for adults and one for children, with Jim Farnum and Sabina Thomas

Saturday, November 5, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Santa Barbara County's Nojoqui Park, Group Area D

Participation is limited to 15 adults and 15 children.

Registration is now open to members and nonmembers at [syvnhs@syvnature.org](mailto:syvnhs@syvnature.org) or 805/ 693-5683.

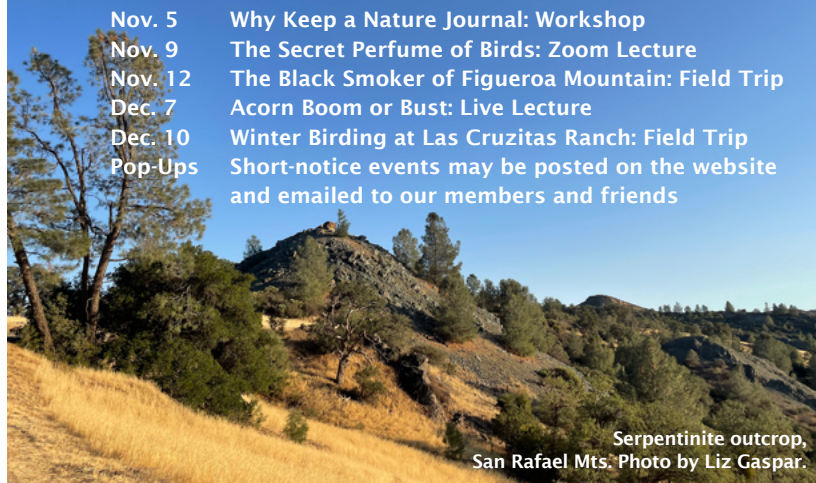
When registering, please let us know the number of adults and children.

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

Join Santa Ynez Valley Natural History Society board members Jim Farnum and Sabina Thomas for a nature journaling workshop for the entire family! Experience how much fun you can have creating a visual record of your interactions with nature. Discover how journaling can enhance your observational skills while recording a memory of a place and time. Contrary to popular belief, proficiency in drawing is not a prerequisite for beginning a journal but will enhance the experience as you learn to draw what you see. The class is being offered to both adults (age 15 and up)

## Upcoming SYVNHS Lectures, Field Trips, and Workshops

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|---------|---|
| Nov. 5  | Why Keep a Nature Journal: Workshop   |
| Nov. 9  | The Secret Perfume of Birds: Zoom Lecture   |
| Nov. 12 | The Black Smoker of Figueroa Mountain: Field Trip                                       |
| Dec. 7  | Acorn Boom or Bust: Live Lecture  |
| Dec. 10 | Winter Birding at Las Cruzitas Ranch: Field Trip  |
| Pop-Ups | Short-notice events may be posted on the website and emailed to our members and friends |



Serpentinite outcrop,  
San Rafael Mts. Photo by Liz Gaspar.

and children (4 to 14 years of age) at the same time and location but with different guides to ensure maximum benefit to each group. Everybody is welcome, with or without children! We will be seated on picnic tables under the shade of a sycamore and oak canopy. Adults, please bring a

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## President's Message from Marion Schlinger

Dear SYVNHS Members and Friends,

Fall is trying to bring on cooler nights and, thank goodness, cooler days. The brutal heat wave in early September reminded me of the first summer when my family moved to Phoenix in June 1966. The temperature on the Black Canyon Freeway as we approached Phoenix was 117 and it seemed to be about that all summer. Coming from Connecticut, it was quite a radical difference, but we had A/C and a pool and potholders for the steering wheel!

Water seems to be one of our leading concerns

in the West and particularly in California and here in the Santa Ynez Valley. With Cachuma Lake hovering at just over 30% capacity, we are all hoping that we get decent rain as we go into our rainy season. Figures I recently saw were that 94% of California is in severe, extreme, or exceptional drought and that 1200 wells have run dry this year alone—50% more than last year. Further, 64% of wells are at below-normal water levels. My "Old Farmer's Almanac" arrived a couple of weeks ago. My goodness, it is now so "big" it comes as a hard cover book almost two inches thick! That aside, the forecast for the Pacific Southwest region

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predicts "warmer and wetter than normal, with above-normal mountain snows." (Good news for skiers and spring runoff.) And the "stormiest periods will be mid- to late-December, early and late January, early and late February and late March" (maybe a March Miracle?). Let's keep our fingers crossed, and meanwhile, mindfully conserve as much water as we can.

If we turn our attention elsewhere, there is extreme flooding all over the world: in Pakistan, Italy, Australia, Nigeria, and our own Tennessee that was hit by an atmospheric river (the new buzz word). And then there is the flooding from hurricane Fiona in Puerto Rico and Ian's devastating blow to Florida that leaves us all asking, What is this world coming to? And could we please have some of that water?!

Happily, we continue to bring you lectures, field trips, and workshops to expand our knowledge and appreciation of our natural world here at home. Due to timing of finalizing some of the programs in this issue, *Magpie Calls* will only be available as an online newsletter.

Coming in February we will have our annual

meeting along with a fascinating lecture presentation. At the annual meeting we vote for continuing board members and new board members. This next year we will have two vacancies on the board as two members will be termed out. If anyone out there is interested in joining the SYVNHS board, please contact us by email [syvnhs@syvnature.org](mailto:syvnhs@syvnature.org). And, if you are outside of the Santa Ynez Valley, don't worry about driving here. We plan to continue having our monthly board meetings via Zoom.

We have had quite a successful year and plan to continue with fascinating programs and fun field trips in 2023. I know your mailboxes, like mine, are already filling up with requests for year-end donations. We will not add to that onslaught of requests. However, if you enjoy our programs and our library of past webinar presentations that are on our website, please keep us in mind as you make your year-end donations. Here is a link to [DONATE](#).

Your President,  
Marion Schlinger

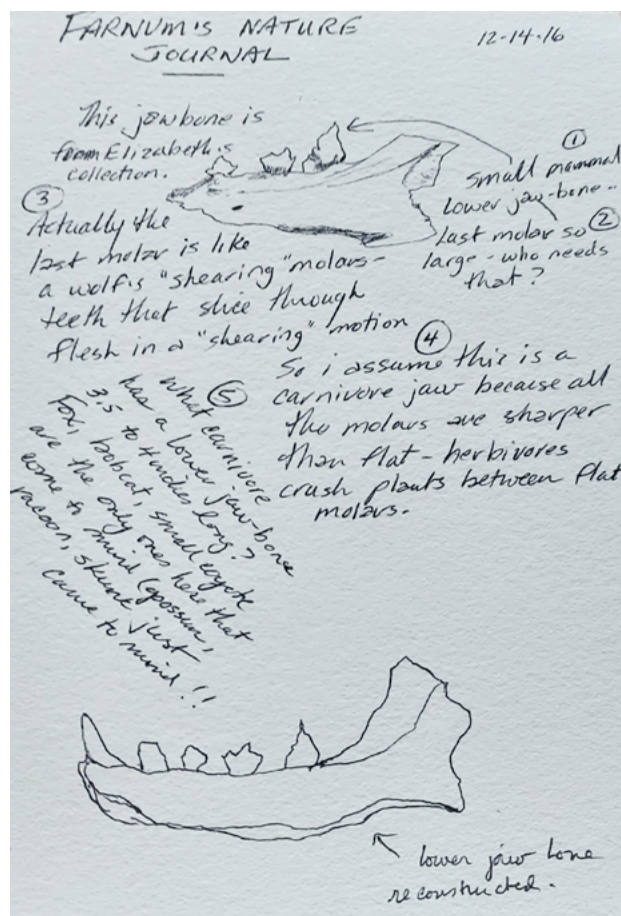
journal, if you have one, a pencil, pen or other drawing/writing implement and an open mind to begin the joy of journaling. All materials (journals, pencils and colored pencils) will be provided for the children's workshop.

**Jim Farnum** will guide adult participants in their introduction to nature journaling. He studied forestry at UC Berkeley and majored in wildlife management. He continues to be interested in wild animals and has a passion for fly fishing.

**Sabina Thomas** will work with the children who attend the workshop. Sabina teaches earth science courses at Santa Barbara City College and is the Nature Education Manager at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, where she has helped children create their own nature journals.

Right: Quail drawing from the nature journal of Jim Farnum.

Far right: Notes and jawbone sketches from Jim Farnum's nature journal.





### The Secret Perfume of Birds: Uncovering the Science of Avian Scent

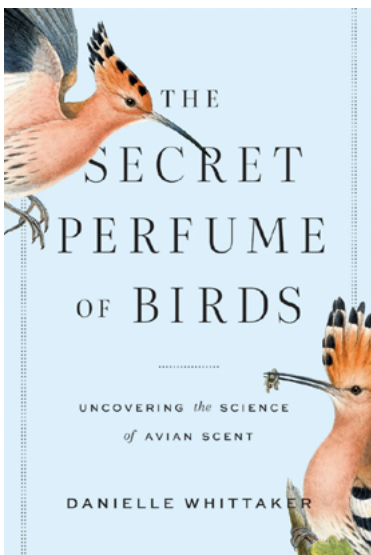
Free Zoom lecture with Danielle Whittaker

Wednesday, November 9, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

This Zoom lecture includes a live presentation followed by a Q & A. The registration link will be emailed to SYVNHS members and friends and will be posted for visitors to our website [www.syvnature.org](http://www.syvnature.org).

The presentation recording will be posted online after the event.

Join Danielle Whittaker as she discusses her new book, *The Secret Perfume of Birds: Uncovering the Science of Avian Scent*. As an evolutionary biologist, Whittaker was puzzled by the lack of evidence for the peculiar but widespread belief that birds have no sense of smell. Exploring the science behind the myth led her on an unexpected quest investigating mysteries from how juncos win a fight to why cowbirds smell like cookies. Whittaker will share emerging research about birds' ability to produce complex chemical



Book cover courtesy of the author.

signals that influence their behavior, including where they build nests, when they pick a fight, and why they fly away. Mate choice, or sexual selection—a still enigmatic aspect of many animals' lives—appears to be particularly influenced by smell. Whittaker's pioneering studies suggest that birds' sexy (and scary) signals are produced by symbiotic bacteria that manufacture scents in the oil that birds stroke on their feathers when preening. Whittaker also examines the smelly chemicals of a variety of creatures, from iguanas and bees to monkeys and humans and will describe how scent is important not just for birds but for all animals, including humans.

**Danielle J. Whittaker** is an evolutionary biologist and the managing director of the Center for Oldest Ice Exploration (COLDEX) at Oregon State University. From gibbons in Indonesia to the dark-eyed juncos of North America, her research focuses on the forces that influence animal behavior, mate selection, and, ultimately, evolution.



Evolutionary biologist and author  
Danielle Whittaker.  
Photo by Nicole Cottom.

### The Legendary Black Smoker of Figueroa Mountain: Exploring Old Mines and Marvelous Rocks

Field trip with Susie Bartz

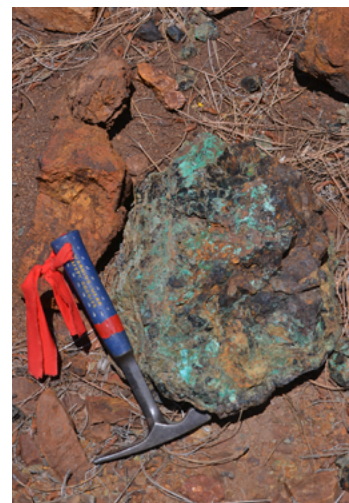
Saturday, November 12, 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Participation is limited to 15. Good physical condition and good balance are essential for this trip. Registration is now open for members and will open for nonmembers on November 2 at [syvnhs@syvnature.org](mailto:syvnhs@syvnature.org) or 805/ 693-5683. Members \$10 / Nonmembers \$25 / Children \$5

"Black Smokers" are vents of hydrothermal fluids, located at mid-ocean ridges. They bring up enriched minerals to form a crust around the vent that grows upward like a chimney. Our local black smoker is one of only a few that have been tectonically uplifted and exposed on land so the "hydrothermal enrichment" of the rocks can be mined and, in our case, examined.

The exploration of the black smoker of Figueroa Mountain begins with an introduction to the Little Pine fault and the Franciscan rocks beyond. We will drive up Figueroa Mountain Road to the trailhead and walk downhill to the site. The trail descent is moderate, winding down through

dense chaparral with some more difficult, loose rocky rubble and a few narrow areas with steep drop-offs on one side. Trail length is about one-half mile to the smoker site at 3800 ft. elevation, where the fossil black smoker was discovered, researched, cleaved by rock hounds, and eventually broken up by collapse along a nearby fault. The ascent follows the same route, with several strenuous parts in steep areas. Some shade is available under pine trees. Along the way we'll see the recumbent chevron folds of radiolarian chert, exposures of pillow lavas, and the colorful hydrothermally enriched rocks that gave shape to the history



This chunk of smoker shows  
hydrothermal enrichment.  
Photo by Susie Bartz.

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of mining in the area. On the return drive down Figueroa Mountain Road, we'll stop and walk to a magnificent serpentinite landslide. Here we'll enjoy lunch and look for ancient minerals in the rocks, with clues to the tectonic events that formed them.



A landslide boulder near the smoker.  
Photo by Susie Bartz.

Good physical condition and good balance are essential for this field trip. Participants are strongly urged to use hiking poles.

As a geology educator, **Susie Bartz** 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. She holds a degree in geology from SBCC, and she helped complete a project publishing the maps of legendary geologist Tom Dibblee, who was her friend and mentor, and in whose memory she dedicates her field trips. Susie enjoys hiking and backpacking, and lives in Santa Barbara with her husband and assorted cats, and has two married daughters and three darling grandsons.



Geologist Susie Bartz. Photo by Jarry Bartz.

### Acorn Boom or Bust: What makes a good or bad acorn year in California?

Free in-person lecture with Dr. Walt Koenig  
Wednesday, December 7, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.  
Solvang Library, 1745 Mission Dr.  
Co-sponsored by Solvang Library  
This talk will also be live-streamed via Zoom (a link will be emailed to SYVNHS members and friends)

Join us for an evening with zoologist, researcher, and acorn woodpecker expert Walt Koenig, who will be discussing his work with the California Acorn Survey, a statewide effort to quantify patterns of acorn production by California oaks. Masting, which is a highly variable, synchronized seed production within a population of plants, is well known among oaks. How and why oaks mast, however, is poorly understood, despite the strong ecosystem effects that acorn crops have on populations of animals, both in California and elsewhere. The goals of the Survey are to gain an understanding about how trees synchronize their reproductive efforts and the interactions between acorn



production and other life-history traits, both of the trees and the animals that depend on them.

**Walt Koenig** got interested in California oak woodlands as an undergraduate at Stanford, after which he moved across the Bay to UC Berkeley where he studied social behavior of the acorn woodpecker at UC's Hastings Reserve in upper Carmel Valley. After a year at Occidental College, he returned to Hastings as a Research Zoologist for UC's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology until 2008, when he followed his spouse to Cornell's Lab of Ornithology as a Senior Scientist. He and his wife are now retired and back in upper Carmel Valley, where she studies Irish and Cape Breton Island fiddling while Walt hangs out in his old office at Hastings and heads the California Acorn Survey.



Left: One of Walt Koenig's long-time research sites is Sedgwick Reserve. Photo by John Evarts.

Top right: Walt Koenig. Photo by Bruce Lyons.

Bottom right: Valley Oak acorns. Photo by Walt Koenig.





**Winter Birding at Las Cruzitas Ranch**

Field Trip with Cruz Phillips

Saturday, December 10, 9 a.m. to noon

Participation is limited to 20. Advance registration opens at 9:00 a.m. for Members on November 10 and on November 30 for nonmembers at [syvnhs@syvnature.org](mailto:syvnhs@syvnature.org) or 805/ 693-5683.

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

Directions and meeting location will be sent to registrants.

This trip will introduce the rich bird life at Las Cruzitas, a 1500-acre ranch to the north of Cachuma Lake in the Santa Ynez Valley. Our outing will entail easy strolling to view birds in the wild and around feeders. This can be a fulfilling trip for those with limited mobility, as there are multiple easy access bird feeders and great diversity and numbers at the feeders.

Individuals or a small group are welcome to stay at the feeders. This will be a great opportunity for both novice and experienced birders to see our valley's winter avifauna. The ranch also has occasional fly-overs from nearby Cachuma Lake, including bald and golden eagles.

Bring binoculars and cameras and expect to see over 40 species of birds. You can bring a sack lunch and stay longer to eat in the yard near the feeders.



Left: Prairie Falcon. Photo by Greg Gillson, Macaulay Library.

Top right: Rufous-crowned sparrow. Photo by Heather Pickard, Macaulay Library.

Bottom right: Male Phainopepla. Photo by Heather Pickard, Macaulay Library.

**Please enjoy these photos from five full field trips in Spring 2022.**

A good variety for a beautiful spring season: an oak-planting workshop at Sedgwick Reserve; birding at Las Cruzitas Ranch; an Earth Day hike on Cachuma's Live Oak Camp trails; a pop-up visit to Arroyo Hondo Preserve; and a geology trip to the San Rafael Mountains mélange.

Gary Nett (in yellow) describes proper techniques for planting and protecting oak seedlings at the SYVNHS oak-planting and identification workshop at Sedgwick Reserve on March 5. Photo by John Evarts.

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A boarding visitor at Las Crusitas Ranch last March was an enjoyable distraction from viewing a vesper sparrow in the distance. Photo by Kate McCurdy.



Left: Arroyo Hondo field trip (May 2) trip leader and SYVNHS long-time member Sally Isaacson photographing scarlet larkspur in a burn area. Photo by Margie Popper.



Returning to the trailhead after a beautiful Earth Day hike on the Live Oak trail system. Photo by Margie Popper.



Left: Geology expert Art Wahl presented our first in-person lecture in over two years on May 20. The next day, Art led members and friends of the Society on a geology trip of the San Rafael Mountains area to see his favorite rock formations up close. This photo features Art Wahl and a boulder of blue schist. Photo by Sam Spaulding.