



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

Upcoming Lectures and Field Trips

The 10 Best, the 10 Worst, and the 10 Ugliest Mushrooms in Southern California
Lecture with Bob Cummings, PhD, Prof. (Emeritus)
Co-hosted by the Los Olivos Library
Thursday, February 7, 7:30 p.m.
Los Olivos Community Organization Hall (LOCO)
2374 Alamo Pintado Avenue, Los Olivos

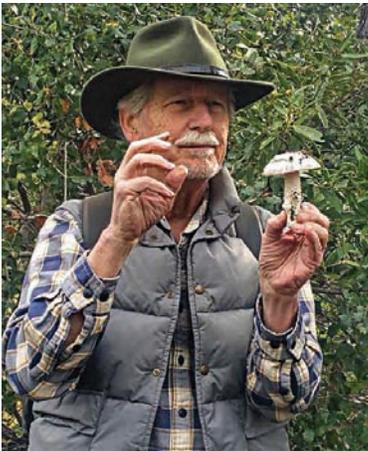


Photo courtesy of Bob Cummings

Bob Cummings has been teaching about mushrooms in the field and in the classroom for over 40 years. He shares some of his experiences in his own words:

“Out collecting in our lovely forests and oak woodlands, people always stop to look in our baskets and

Upcoming SYVNHS Lectures, Field Trips, and Workshops

Feb. 7	Mushrooms in Southern California (lecture)
Feb. 23	Mozart’s Starling (lecture)
March 8	The Bizarre World of Carnivorous Plants (lecture)
March 23	Carpinteria Salt Marsh Reserve (field trip)
April 14	Natural History of Quiota Creek (field trip)
May 11	Meet the Naturalist (workshop for all ages)
May 15	Changing Fire Regimes (lecture)
June 8	Pine Mountain Ridge (field trip)
TBD	Wildflower Wildcard (field trip)

ask if we’ve found any good edibles. And which ones are the best. There are so many, I usually forget some of the best ones. I’ve been asked this question so many times that I decided to make a checklist of my personal favorites to be better prepared to answer next time. So, what’s number one going to be? Black Truffles don’t occur here. They would top my list and probably everyone else’s, but it wouldn’t be fair to include them. White Porcini? Black Trumpets? Morels? Or Coccoras (...think about that last one)? Over the years my rankings of the best edibles has had to be revised many times. Usually because of the most

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Mozart’s Starling and Other Avian Tales

Lecture and book signing with Lyanda Lynn Haupt
Co-hosted by Sedgwick Reserve
Saturday, February 23, 7:00 p.m.
UC Sedgwick Reserve, Tipton House
Depending on conditions, there may be a pre-lecture outing to view Starlings at Sedgwick at 5:00 p.m.

Lyanda Lynne Haupt will present her latest book, *Mozart’s Starling*, the story of the composer and his pet bird that led her into the workings of the symphony, the opera, ornithological labs, the depths of music theory, the field of linguistics, and the nature of creative inspiration, and to the crazy experience of raising a starling in her own home. The book explores the spirit of the natural world

and our wild animal companions. Robert Michael Pyle, author of *Through a Green Lens* and *Mariposa Road*, writes,

“A brave thing it is to write a love-song to starlings, in a conservation culture inclined not only to struggle with exotic species, but to demonize them. But Lyanda Haupt has done just that—not as apologist for wildlings in North America, but as celebrant of an utterly extraordinary,



Lyanda Lynn Haupt with Carmen, her pet starling. Photo courtesy of Lyanda Lynn Haupt

(Continued on next page)

beautiful, and deeply engaging animal in and of itself. In prose as lovely as birdsong and as clear and sharp as the cool air itself, she has given starlings—hers, Mozart’s, the whole species—the kind of loving and rigorous Life that every kind of creature deserves but very few get. I thought of Gerald Durrell, Konrad Lorenz, and Jane Goodall, none of whom I loved reading more. The story of Carmen, Star, and their humans is as riveting as a good novel, and I learned as much about Mozart as about birdsong and birdbrains. I enjoyed Mozart’s Starling immensely, and I challenge anyone to read it and still treat starlings inhumanely. Lucky is the bird that finds its Papagena.”

We are in for a treat. We also hope that we can take a walk to the pond to see the nightly spectacle of starlings and blackbirds returning to roost for the night among the cattails.

Lyanda Lynne Haupt is an award-winning author, naturalist, ecophilosopher, and speaker whose writing is at the forefront of the movement to connect people with nature in their everyday lives. She holds a master’s degree in environmental ethics and philosophy. Her newest book is *Mozart’s Starling* (Little, Brown, April, 2017). Lyanda’s other books include: *The Urban Bestiary: Encountering the Everyday Wild*; *Crow Planet: Essential Wisdom from the Urban Wilderness*; *Pilgrim on the Great Bird Continent: The Importance of Everything and Other Lessons*

from *Darwin’s Lost Notebooks*; and *Rare Encounters with Ordinary Birds*.

Lyanda has created and directed educational programs for Seattle Audubon, worked in raptor rehabilitation in Vermont, and been a seabird researcher for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the remote tropical Pacific. Her writing has appeared in a variety of publications, including *Orion*, *Discover*, *Utne*, *LA Times*, *Image*, *Huffington Post*, *Wild Earth*, and *Conservation Biology Journal*. She lives in Seattle with her husband and daughter, a mixed backyard chicken flock, and Carmen the starling, featured in her newest book.



Courtesy of Lyanda Lynn Haupt

**Unexpected Appetites:
The Bizarre World of Carnivorous Plants**

Lecture with William Hoyer on Carnivorous Plants
Friday, March 8, 7:00 p.m.
St. Mark’s in-the Valley Episcopal Church, Stacey Hall
2901 Nojoqui Avenue, Los Olivos



William Hoyer in Papua with a tree kangaroo.
Photo courtesy of William Hoyer

Join us for a look at a fascinating topic as the Santa Ynez Valley Natural History Society welcomes back naturalist William Hoyer who will present a lecture on one of his favorite subjects: carnivorous plants.

Most people have heard of the Venus flytrap, but the world of carnivorous plants is much larger than you think! Learn about the diverse and bizarre world carnivorous plants in this botanical primer. Attendees will learn what makes a carnivorous plant carnivorous,

where in the world they grow, how they trap, and conservation issues they face. Some of these unusual plants are even found growing in our very own state of California.

William Hoyer is a long time carnivorous plant enthusiast and the natural resources manager for the U.S. Navy on San Nicholas Island. He serves on the board of directors for the California Invasive Plant Council, and is a member of the Islands of the California Botanical Collaborative. William lives in Santa Barbara and spends his free time outdoors and practices wildlife photography. Before his career with the Navy, William earned his BS in Plant Science from Cornell University and served in the US Peace Corps in the Republic of Vanuatu, working on sustainable agriculture and marine resources projects.



Pitcher plant (*Nepenthes* species) in Papua, Indonesia.
Photo by William Hoyer.

Birds and Ecology of the Carpinteria Salt Marsh Reserve

Field Trip with Larry Ballard, Joan Lentz, and Guy Tingos
Saturday March 23, 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Advance registration begins February 23 at
synature@west.net or 805/ 693-5683.

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

Carpinteria Salt Marsh Reserve is the only salt marsh habitat between Point Mugu and Morro Bay that experiences daily tidal fluctuations throughout the year. About half of its 230 acres is under the management of the UC Natural Reserve System. The salt marsh ecosystem here is



Carpinteria Salt Marsh Reserve.
Photo by John Callender, Wikimedia Commons

one of the most widely studied in California. Nearly 250 bird species have been recorded in the marsh, ranging from the endemic Belding's Savannah Sparrow to cosmopolitan species such as Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, and Caspian Tern. We will also look at some of the plants, fish, crabs, butterflies, snails and bivalves that make the marsh their home. This is an easy, level walk with facilities on the premises. A pair of binoculars is not required, but highly recommended.

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. **Joan Lentz** has offered birding classes and trips in the Santa Barbara for more than 35 years. Her book, *A Naturalist's Guide to the Santa Barbara Region*, is a regional classic. To prepare for this field trip, participants might want to read or re-read Chapter Five of her guide, which is titled "Coastal Wetlands—Mysteries in the Mud." **Guy Tingos** leads birding trips for groups such as Santa Barbara Audubon, SYVNHS, and UC Sedgwick Reserve.



Belding's savannah sparrow.
Photo courtesy of Pacific Southwest Region USFWS

Exploring the Natural History of Quiota Creek

Field trip with Tim Matthews

Sunday, April 14, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Participation is limited to 20

Advance registration begins March 14 at
synature@west.net or 805/ 693-5683.

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

Much of Quiota Creek runs through the 4,500-acre Mitchell Ranch. This little slice of paradise at the foot of the Santa Ynez Mountain's North side is beautiful, especially in the springtime. With adequate rain, we should see an abundance of wildflowers, shrubs, and trees. With some luck we will see an assortment of critters also, including birds, butterflies, reptiles, and fish (steelhead). This is peak migration time for birds and many species are attracted to this special place that provides the three things that they need: food, water, and cover. Bring binoculars, sunscreen, lunch, and water. Dress in layers and wear good hiking boots. Hiking poles may be useful but not necessary.

Tim Matthews is a Scientific Aid with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife at the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve and has led many field trips for the Society and other local organizations over the years.



Above: Quiota Creek watershed.
Photo by John Evarts

Right: Yellow warbler. Photo by Keith Williams, Wikimedia Commons



Meet the Naturalist

Free Workshop with Paul Collins
Co-hosted by the Solvang Library
Saturday, May 11, 10:30 a.m. to noon
Solvang Library
1745 Mission Drive, Solvang

This casual workshop for all ages is your chance to get a close-up look at some of the skulls and skins from the world-class collection of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. Naturalist Paul Collins will share some treasures from the museum and attempt to answer any and all questions about wildlife from our region. Drop by at any time during the 90-minute program, and if you have an animal specimen that you would like help in identifying, this is your chance!

Paul Collins is the Curator of Vertebrate Zoology, 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. He is currently working with H. Lee Jones on a book about the birds of the California Channel Islands.

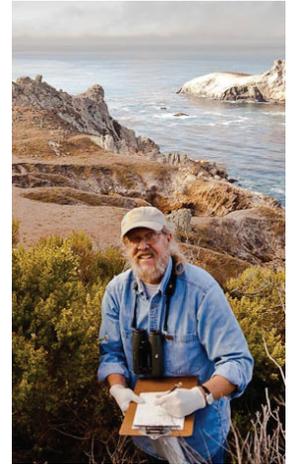


Photo courtesy of Bruce Reitherman

The Causes and Consequences of Changing Fire Regimes

Lecture with Nicole Molinari
Co-Hosted by the Los Olivos Library
Wednesday, May 15, 7:00 p.m.
Los Olivos Community Hall (LOCO)
2374 Alamo Pintado, Los Olivos

Fire has played an integral role in shaping plant communities across California, yet today fire frequency, size, and severity seem to be steadily increasing across the state. What are the causes and consequences of these changes? To illustrate the complexities associated with this question, we will compare and contrast the historical and current fire regimes in two dominant vegetation types in California: conifer forests and chaparral shrublands. The drivers of changing fire regime (e.g., fire suppression, population growth, drought) within these two vegetation types will also be compared and used as a platform to explore potential solutions to the problem. Lastly, impediments to post-fire vegetation recovery under these new conditions will be discussed.

Nicole Molinari is a vegetation ecologist working for the US Forest Service. She received her MS in Biology from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, and her PhD in Ecology and Evolution from UC Santa Barbara. Nicole has experience working in grasslands, shrublands, and forests. She has a broad interest in the consequences of human-induced global changes, including the effects of biological invasion, nutrient enrichment, climate change, and altered disturbance regimes on vegetation patterns. Nicole is stationed at the Los Padres National Forest Headquarters, and lives in Goleta with her husband and two boys.



Nicole Molinari in the field, Los Padres National Forest.
Photo courtesy of Nicole Molinari

**Wildflower Wildcard:
Spring Hike Where the Flowers Are****Field trip with a botanist**

Date and location to be determined, based on area blooms
Glorious winter rains don't ensure that our region is out of a drought, however they do give promise good wildflower displays. Given the many recent burns, there is sure to be an excellent choice of sites to visit. As the spring season approaches, we'll be scouting area trails for the best wildflower shows, and announce date and place a few weeks out. Stay tuned!



Left: Lupines and poppies, Figueroa Mountain.

Above: Mariposa lily.
Photos by Liz Gaspar

Plant Life and Natural History of Pine Mountain Ridge

Field Trip with Rick Burgess and Larry Ballard

Saturday June 8, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Advance registration begins May 8 at synature@west.net or 805/ 693-5683

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

Pine Mountain Ridge features the highest diversity of conifers in Ventura County and is one of the few “sky islands” in our region that has escaped extensive fires over the past several centuries. We hope to see Pine Fritillary in bloom, a plant more commonly found in the Sierra Nevada and San Bernardino Mountains, along with a number of other unusual plants not found elsewhere in the county. The fleshy red Snow Plant will be seen near the trailhead. Mountain Chickadees and White-headed Woodpeckers are fairly common, and we may see Sagebrush Lizard.

The moderate hike is about 5 miles roundtrip on a good trail with an elevation gain of a few hundred feet. Primitive facilities are available close to the trailhead. Participants should be prepared for a full day’s trip (to include drive time to and from the trailhead) and be in condition for hiking at elevations above 6000 feet.

Rick Burgess is a botanist who worked as a planner for the City of Thousand Oaks and was instrumental in the preservation of open space around the Conejo Valley. He is the author of the forthcoming *Flora of Mainland Ventura County*. **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.



Pine fritillary (*Fritillaria pinetorum*). Photo by John Game*
*<https://www.flickr.com/photos/47945928@N02/31941669953/>

President’s Message

Dear Members and Friends of the Society,

On December 29, we concluded our ambitious 2018 program, which included a record number of events: 8 field trips, 10 lectures, 1 film, and a workshop. Our subjects ranged from the top predators – grizzlies, wolves, and sharks – to the plants and birds found on the mainland and the Channel Islands. We vicariously explored the mysteries and natural wonders of remote San Nicholas Island and learned about the urban forests of UC Santa Barbara. We also studied the effects of wildfire and the fascinating geology of the Central Coast.

Last year your board instituted modest field trip fees for our members and raised the field trip fees for non-members. We also began a reservations policy that allows members to sign up 30 days in advance for each field trip. Both of these changes are working well.

Your generous responses to our annual appeal brought in more than \$1700. These additional

funds will help us cover the recent board-approved increase in the honorariums we offer the expert field trip leaders and lecturers that are fundamental to our mission.

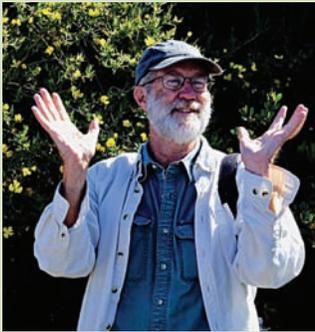
I would like to express our gratitude to board member Marge Erickson, who is retiring from the board after having served 16 years, including 2 terms as board president. Marge is a charter member of the Society and she guided us through the legal process of becoming a tax-exempt non-profit corporation. The board extends its sincerest thanks to Marge; we will miss her program contributions and sage legal advice.

We also thank all of our members for their continued support and participation in our program events. I would enjoy hearing from you at any time; constructive criticism and suggestions for future programs are always welcome (805-686-1551; dennis.beebe@comcast.net).

— Dennis Beebe

Highlights of 2018 SYVNHS Field Trips • Photos by John Evarts

Color After Ashes: Following the Fire-Followers: April 28, 2018



Left: Trip leader Larry Ballard explains that bush poppy (*Dendromecon rigida*) is diplochorous, since it has two methods of seed dispersal: (1) explosive dehiscence when seed pod opens and “flings” the seeds out and (2) by harvester ants that carry the seeds away.



Right: One of the fire-followers we found was *Phacelia grandiflora*, or large flowered phacelia.

Restoration and the Greater Devereux Slough Ecosystem: October 20, 2018



Trip leader Dr. Lisa Stratton, who is manager of UCSB's restoration projects and open space, pointed out several acres of the North Campus Open Space that had recently been seeded with native bunch grasses.

The Volcanic Landscapes at Avila Beach and Vicinity: November 4, 2018



Left: At the starting point of the trip at Port Harford Pier, co-leader Dr. Tanya Atwater gave an introductory overview of plate tectonics and mid-ocean spreading centers where pillow basalts form.

Right: Interior jointing on a pillow.



Left: Society members gamely scrambled over boulders to get a close up view of some of the best exposures of pillow basalts in North America.

Right: Trip co-leader Susie Bartz (second from left) described the extensive light-colored exposures of Obispo Tuff at the south end of Avila Beach. The origins of this volcanic formation are somewhat enigmatic.

Natural History of Arroyo Hondo Preserve: December 2, 2018



Above: In the shaded recesses of Arroyo Hondo Preserve, the group saw a number of fern species, including this Sonoran maiden fern (*Thelypteris puberula*), which is at the northern limits of its range in coastal Santa Barbara County.

Left: While participants gathered in Hollister Meadow, trip co-leader John Warner gave an introduction to the extensive native plant restoration programs at Arroyo Hondo, which were then toured on a hike.

recent exotic and memorable mushroom dish I've eaten. If you are a mushroom hunter you have your own strong opinions that probably conflict with mine. Heated discussions to follow. After edibility, the next question people invariably ask is if we've seen any poisonous species on our hunt. And which ones are the worst. And how likely might it be for a beginner to make an unfortunate mistake? We answer best we can without enough specimens or pictures to illustrate our points. For the remainder of the hunt I find myself making a mental checklist of the toxic species around here, too. Number one on most peoples' list has to be the Death Cap, a European species, as is the aforementioned Black Truffle.

But unlike the Truffle, the Death Cap was successful in getting established in Southern California. Why couldn't it have been the other way around? But many other toxic mushrooms cause a lot of pain and suffering here, too. My list of toxic species has had to be revised also over the years, due in large part to the specimen identifications I do for emergency rooms. Good stories to follow.

Finally, the ten ugliest mushrooms (that only a mother (or a mycologist?) could love). I think these less-than-lovely species deserve their share of time in the spotlight too, warts and all. They may be photogenically challenged, but they merit appreciation equal to that of all forms of life (I'm thinking of Naked Mole Rats for some reason). How many times have you had to point out the mycorrhizal value of

The Dog Turd Mushroom, or the fascinating life cycle of the Dog Vomit Slime Mold, after stopping someone from giving them a thoughtless kick? Should our list include Black Witch's Butter instead of the Black Witch's Saddle? Should we swap out the Dog Penis Stinkhorn for the Dog Turd Mushroom? Tough questions. By the way, have you noticed how often witches and dogs get dragged into this odd sector of mushroom names?"

Bob Cummings has been leading forays, collecting, photographing, and eating wild mushrooms in the Santa Barbara area since the 1960s. Over the years he has built a large collection of photos and a modest herbarium of specimens for taxonomic reference. He is a member of the North American Mycological Association Toxicology Committee. He fields calls on a regular basis from laypersons, physicians, and veterinarians from central California involved in mushroom poisonings. He also works closely with emergency room physicians at local hospitals and clinics. He is a frequent speaker for the Los Angeles Mycological Society, and has given talks and led forays for many other mycological and natural history groups from San Francisco to San Diego. Bob currently teaches an online course in plant diversity for Santa Barbara City College. For the past six years he has pursued his other passion, wine making. He lives in Montecito with his wife, Lynne, a retired elementary school teacher (and bird-watcher).



Oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus* species).
Photo by Bob Cummings



Chanterelle (*Cantharellus* species). Photo by Bob Cummings

Annual Members' Meeting

Short meeting preceding our evening presentation
Thursday, February 7, 7:15 p.m.
Los Olivos Community Organization Hall (LOCO)
2374 Alamo Pintado Avenue, Los Olivos
Immediately preceding Bob Cummings' lecture this evening,
the Annual Members' Meeting will be held at 7:15 p.m. to
hear a brief summary from our board president, to elect
board members, and to hear a brief Treasurer's report. Mem-
bers, please join us.

Marc's Stumper

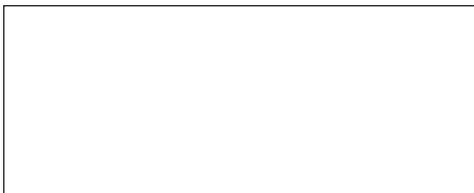
To paraphrase Cole Porter, "Birds do it, bees do it, even mushrooms and trees do it...." Of course what they all do is exchange genetic materials to produce unique offspring that are not identical with either parent. Spring is coming, and it's an appropriate time to consider sex. There are several alternatives, like one dividing into two or cloning, that seem much easier than two cooperating to produce one. Why is sexual reproduction so universal, even among flowers and fungi and "simple" bacteria? What are the exceptions?

About last issue's stumper: Summer wildflowers get the same benefits as all late bloomers. They flower after the others are done. That means less competition for space, pollinators, and the little water that remains, including summer fog drip. I find swarms of insects and hummingbirds on our summer wildflowers. Conditions are harsh before the rains begin, so these late flowers are important for many critters. Since our plants and animals adapted together, maybe the whole ecosystem needs these late bloomers to support the pollinators for next year?

Some native shrubs are "dioecious" with separate male and female plants that look quite different. Here are two examples, Arroyo Willow (*Salix lasiolepis*, SALICACEAE) and Coyote Bush (*Baccharis pilularis*, ASTERACEAE). Both of my photos show female seed-bearing flowers on the left and male pollen-bearing flowers on the right. Why do they even bother?



Mark Kummel's local nature photos are at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/treebeard/>



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