

Lightning Talk Sessions - 2017 California Naturalist Regional Rendezvous

-- AM MORNING SESSION --

Engaging the Community One Walk at a Time. (Dave Barry, Course Affiliation: Pepperwood Preserve/Santa Rosa Junior College) I will give a talk about what I have been doing as a CA Naturalist. To hopefully inspire other fellow CA Naturalists to get engaged to the public in some way. I will discuss activities I have done with various nonprofit organizations focusing on child outdoor education & raptor migration. Lesson learned: Many of the general public want to experience nature but are unsure how to? We California Naturalists can, no must be that link to show them the way.

Californian Bats and what we on the West Coast can do to prepare and mitigate in advance of the spread of White Nose Syndrome. (Natalie Downe, Course Affiliation: The Coastal Institute at Camp Ocean Pines) This lightning talk will cover the importance of bats (adorable these sky puppies) to the local ecology here in California, outline some of the potential threats, including the spread of White Nose Syndrome and what we can do to help curb its impact. White Nose Syndrome which is a fungal disease that is spreading at an alarmingly fast pace, affecting colonies of hibernating bats. It has killed 90% of some species, literally millions of bats since its introduction from Europe / Asia in 2006 in New York, spreading to the central states and with a recent outbreak as west as Washington; it's imperative that we prepare in California.

Citizen Science of Phenology (Sol Henson, Course Affiliation: Sierra Streams Institute) Phenology is the study of the cyclical changes that plants and animals go through. Sierra Streams Institute has taught phenology as a way for students both young and old to contribute meaningfully to a growing body of citizen science climate change data. You will learn how Sierra Streams has incorporated phenology into our California Naturalist program and beyond.

River Otters - Heralds of a Healthy Watershed: Using Citizen Science to Confirm a Species Recovery (Mary Ellen King, Course Affiliation: Point Reyes National Seashore Association (PRNSA)) The River Otter Ecology Project was established in 2012 when we realized that otters were making an under-the radar comeback to the SF Bay Area and that very little was known about their populations here. We filled in those data gaps using citizen science for both research and education. Our earliest project was "OTTER SPOTTER". Citizen scientists observe river otters in their neighborhood stream, river, bay/county state or national park and collect observational data (range, habitats, behavior, reproduction) to share via our website submission form. Our costs to collect greater than 2100 river otter sightings in the past five years has been low; cost for outreach, time to verify and update map data and software. We've established that river otter numbers are increasing again after falling steeply by the 1960's. Their presence is good news for watersheds, because otters need healthy fish and, reasonably clean water and enough space to raise their young to thrive. And thriving they are, even in our highly-populated SF Bay Area. This citizen science reporting project is a portal to introduce people to the wonders of river otters, get folks excited and begin giving them the knowledge they need to understand the importance of watershed health for our survival as a planet of many species.

Get Them When They Are Young: Practical Tips to Attract Families and Youth (Diana Rohini LaVigne, Course Affiliation: Jepson Herbarium at UC Berkeley) If you don't have a huge budget to host a large-scale family-friendly event, you will need other ways to attract families that don't break the bank and won't eat up all your resources. I will share some of the quick and easy things I have used professionally and personally to attract families and get messaging out to youth about why they should study life sciences, why they should care for the earth and why exploring nature are vital to our future as a community. Social media, impactful storytelling, building ambassador programs and the power of visuals are some topics covered.

Nature's Magic: Monarchs/Milkweed and other Awesome Relationships (Cathy Monroe, Course Affiliation: Hopland Research and Extension Center) Restoring habitat for butterflies and moths, and other pollinators through gardens and enhancing natural environments. Educating about the need for such restoration and connecting people to some of the awe in nature- the monarch's life cycle and dependence on milkweed and other wonders such as the twilight opening of evening primroses (Yes! you can watch them open) and zipping hawkmoth visitors. Such opportunities to witness nature's magic can spark devotion and a desire to act as citizen scientists and advocates.

Eel River fish habitat studies.... and What's up with the Scott Dam Relicensing? (Jennifer Riddell, Course Affiliation: Hopland Research and Extension Center) PG&E owns and operates Scott Dam and Cape Horn Dam on the Eel River, which is unique in that it diverts water for power generation from the Eel River to the Russian River. Stakeholders are all on alert as the dams head into their 50 year relicensing process, which could change everything (or not). What are the possibilities?

Leveraging the Demise of Print (Ellen Cochrane, Course Affiliation: SPAWN (Salmon Protection & Watershed Network)) The major daily newspapers are struggling to stay alive. Just today I learned that The Sacramento Bee parent, McClatchy newspapers is selling major buildings across the country in an attempt to relieve its debt responsibility and to underwrite its effort to optimize digital production. These struggles have led to the emergence of a stronger market for smaller papers, particularly, local neighborhood papers. I will explain how to create a relationship with local editors, neighborhood groups and newsletter publishers to bring environmental articles, columns and opinion pieces to print. I will explain how I started my column, Life on Two Rivers, with the Valley Community Newspaper publishing company.

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-- PM AFTERNOON SESSION --

Partnership in Parks: Uniting a Watershed (Tony Passantino, Course Affiliation: Sonoma Ecology Center) The talk is on strength in partnership. Sugarloaf is one of three state parks under full or partial volunteer and non-profit management in Sonoma Valley. The Cal Nat program unites the parks for educational opportunities for the program participants. The program also builds a cohort of skilled volunteers and park advocates that supports the management and programming that we offer. Volunteer coordinators from each partner in our park coalition have become certified alongside current and future volunteers. We now offer quarterly updates, opportunities and advanced training in our growing community of the tri-park program.

Five naturalists moments of wondering, noticing, immersing, exploring, and celebrating along the Sonoma Coast. (David Berman, Sonoma Coast) Five naturalists moments of wondering, noticing, immersing, exploring, and celebrating along the Sonoma Coast. Five stories from the field that have inspired, motivated, wowed, questioned, and cosmically changed the way I approach teaching and learning from nature and others.

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Seeing Through Time: Using Historical Surveys to Chart 150 Years of Vegetation Change (Arthur Dawson, Baseline Consulting) Nineteenth-century surveys recorded a wealth of vegetation data. At Pepperwood Preserve, this data has informed restoration efforts and provides a glimpse at a landscape shaped and managed by First Peoples. Compared with modern conditions, this data sheds light on what has remained stable and resilient, and what has shifted over the last 150 years.

Tracking California Buckeye Phenology using Citizen Science Observations from Nature's Notebook (MV Eitzel, Course Affiliation: Mt. Diablo Region) Nature's Notebook is an online platform for citizen scientists across the United States to track the timing of seasonal changes (phenology) of their local ecosystems. I tracked bud-burst for California Buckeye in Winter/Spring 2017 in Walnut Creek, CA and downloaded all the citizen science data from across the state on Buckeye to compare results.

For Non-bird Nerds: How to bring bird wonder into your walks (Carolyn Greene, Course Affiliation: Pepperwood Preserve/Santa Rosa Junior College) Don't know the difference between a blue jay and blue bird? Hint - true blue jays don't even live in California! And "blue" birds aren't true blue at all! Birds are often the largest "charismatic megafauna" we see on hikes, but you don't have to be an Audubon lifer to share information and create wonder for visitors on your walks. Plus birding sharpens all your outdoor senses. I'll share easy tidbits and resources to both make you a more observant naturalist and inspire others to learn about and work to conserve birds and their habitats.

The Gift of One Ancestral Land (Kathleen Robbiano, Course Affiliation: Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods) Objective: To encourage naturalists to reconnect indigenous people with their ancestral lands and explore the gifts that may come from shared experience. I facilitated a native basketry workshop for 20 participants at Jenner Headlands Preserve. The instructors were Julia Parker (Kashia Pomo/Coast Miwok) and her family. Jenner Headlands Preserve is Kashia Pomo ancestral land. People shared plant information for basket making, cultural beliefs and stories, reconnection with friends/relatives (half the participants were local native women) and Julia was most happy when she said I've come back home- having been orphaned and had to leave Kashia land when she was quite young. The participants were touched deeply, the land had some of its original people there to bless it with an old tradition, and the staff recognized that many unspoken profound moments took place in the simple form of a workshop.

Use of Remote Camera Traps for Environmental Education (Jeffrey Schwegman, Course Affiliation: Sagehen Creek Field Station) Over the past two decades, camera traps have emerged as important tools for wildlife research, especially population monitoring of elusive mammals like cougars. Triggered remotely by motion and infrared sensors, they provide scientists with 24-hour photo or video surveillance of activity within an area. Yet I believe these relatively inexpensive devices also have untapped potential as teaching tools. As a docent project at Stanford University's Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, I developed a sample camera trap curriculum for an environmental education program, which I'd like to share with the CalNat community. This curriculum has three main goals, which it shares with techniques like nature journaling: developing observational skills, sparking curiosity and the ability to formulate scientific questions, and cultivating a sense of place. It does this by asking students to alternate back and forth between reviewing camera trap footage and visiting the site in person to search for evidence of behaviors observed on film. Throughout, they are urged to keep formulating new questions that either the footage or site visits might help them answer. As a final project, students would produce a short video, weaving together footage to illustrate their questions and discoveries. This concrete product, which they could share over social media, would further cement their feeling of ownership over the process.

Naturalists as Activists: Time to revive a critical role (Caryl Hart, Course Affiliation: Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods) The current administration in Wash DC has resulted in a new era for environmental activism. My talk will present a brief history of naturalists as activists and inspire the group to take on this role for themselves.