



Santa Maria, California Where  
Natural History Comes to Life

# MEADOWLARK

## The Spring Equinox 2021 Newsletter

Our Mission is to inspire and educate our community through regional collections and to promote the discovery and appreciation of the natural world.

### April 22nd, is Earth Day 2021

Come to the Natural History Museum Native Garden **Thursday, April 22nd, Noon - 4pm - for your FREE Native Milkweed Planting Kit** consisting of seeds, paper cups, instructions and planting soil. Camp Fire Girls filled the Seed Packets for Earth Day distribution to YOU!

## "SAVING THE MONARCHS IN OUR OWN BACKYARDS"

When the historic Minerva Club asked the Natural History Museum Board President Judy Garrett if they could video an Earth Day program at the NHM, the Board of Directors had not really fully prepared a plan for the 2nd year of a locked down Earth Day. Only as the programming script for the video emerged, did the local theme emerge as well. "Saving the Monarchs in Our Own Back Yards." NHM Garden Committee member Kathy Sharum contacted the Pismo Monarch Grove to recruit an expert speaker for the video. Peggy Burhenn, a certified master gardener specializing in native plants, graciously accepted and did a wonderful job! Ms. Burhenn explained that planting non-native varieties of milkweed is NOT A GOOD IDEA! Another caution she offered which was news to the audience is: "do not plant any milkweed within 5 miles of overwintering sites of monarchs". Peggy interprets this to mean locations within 5 miles of the coastline of California as well. Ms. Burhenn told the audience of the Museum video volunteers that less than 2,000 monarchs over-wintered on the entire coast of California this year down from over 1 million in 1997! A 99+% decline! Monarch caterpillars will eat only milkweed and will only lay eggs on milkweed. Many factors have reduced the amount of habitat for these lovely insects. We were reminded to reduce and eliminate Roundup and pesticides in our home gardens. Planting of winter blooming nectar flowers was recommended in home gardens for adult monarch butterfly food.

NHM has a Pollinator Garden area within the Native Garden located behind the Museum building which we invite you to visit anytime, though the building remains closed due to COVID restrictions. You will see that narrowleaf milkweed is a bit unimpressive but the 3 redbud trees are in bloom and are a joy to behold. The museum hosted one monarch caterpillar two seasons ago. His/her arrival stirred fantastic excitement!

Earth Day  
2021  
Save  
the  
Monarchs



Peggy Burhenn



Heather Weare's Camp Fire Group  
packing up Milkweed seeds for YOU!



...article continues on page 2

We all urge each reader to come to the Museum **Thursday, April 22nd between Noon and 4 PM** to pickup a **FREE** narrowleaf milkweed planting kit. Will you be lucky enough to host a hungry caterpillar?

For other Earth Day action items for individuals or groups: [www.earthdaynetwork.org](http://www.earthdaynetwork.org)  
[www.earthdaynetwork.org/campaign/the-canopy-project/](http://www.earthdaynetwork.org/campaign/the-canopy-project/) Every \$1 plants one Tree!

The global reforestation campaign shows a map of all the areas this project is impacting. Trees sequester carbon, as Santa Maria's late arborist and Natural History Museum board member, Bailey Hudson liked to tell all he knew! Check it out! We can each make such a difference? **Spread the word!!** *Virginia Souza*

## R NHM President's Report



Dear Natural History Museum Members & Supporters,

Hello to 2021, with a light at the end of the pandemic, we hope. Since our Fall Newsletter many things have happened. We have added 6 advisors from the community. Look for their pictures and the passions they draw from nature here on pages of our newsletter. We have also added 3 new board members: Nancy Heck, CPA has taken over the treasurer's job so that Annie Lawrence can do her art/graphic passion with the NHM Newsletter.

Dave Siminski has been with the NHM as a docent, keeping track of our visitors and leading school tours, and has agreed to join our board. David Kisner is our newest member. He is a habitat restoration professional and our nature consultant at the NHM. At our annual meeting

in thinking about reopening, Dave Siminski and I got together with Mary Housel at the museum and discussed the protocol needed to reopen safely. We haven't set a date yet, but we'll let you know. In the meantime we can be outside, so come see us at the museum on **EARTH DAY, Thursday April 22, 2021**. Our theme is "**Monarchs in Our Own Backyards**". We will be giving out packets of narrowleaf milkweed for you to plant in your backyard. Those butterflies need a place to lay their eggs!.

In February David Kisner, our newest board member gave a very informative presentation about identifying birds. See his very interesting article in this newsletter about about the beautiful Anna's Hummingbird and other hummingbirds.

The docents chose Virginia Souza as Docent of the Year. She seemed a bit surprised, but if you know her she is the glue that holds this museum together. I call her our visionary because she thinks of things in advance. Right now we are waiting to hear about a grant she wrote in December 2020. Keep your fingers crossed everybody. *Judy Garrett*

### JANUARY-JULY

#### Spring 2021 dues are due

C. Acquistapace 6/20  
 P. Chandler 6/20  
 S. Curry 7/20  
 M. Cooper 6/20  
 B. Deutsch 6/20  
 J. Garrett 6/20  
 J. Glines 7/20  
 S. Hajnik 6/20  
 J. Mackey 7/20  
 S. McGill 7/20  
 M. Nanning 7/20  
 C. Ochoa 6/20  
 K. Ransome 6/20  
 K. Scharz 6/20  
 K. Sharum 6/20  
 V. Souza 7/20  
 B. Steveson 7/20  
 K. Thiessen 6/20  
 J. Walsh 6/20

#### Spring 2021 dues are paid

R. Furnberg  
 E. Jones  
 C. Lara  
 E. Wineman  
 K. Wolf  
 C. Magee

### AUGUST-DECEMBER

S. Boydston 10/20  
 B. Centeno  
 L. Chipping 9/20  
 H. Cole 9/20  
 L. Dias 12/20  
 M. Gade 9/20  
 A. Garrett 10/20  
 K. Miles/Gibson 11/20  
 L. Hancock 10/20  
 M. Housel 11/20  
 A. Lawrence 9/20  
 M. Lewis 8/20  
 D. Lyons 11/20  
 P. McCalip 11/20  
 L. McCollister 9/20  
 A. Patino 9/20  
 A. Paulsey 9/20  
 F. Pratt 10/20  
 K. Ramsden 11/20  
 C. Reid 9/20  
 M. Staunton 11/20  
 G. Schrager 11/20  
 A. Shower 11/20  
 L. Snodgrass 11/20  
 J. Stilwell 12/20  
 E. Woods 10/20  
 H. Zacarias

### Membership Donor Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Hummingbird. . . . . \$25 Individual  
 \_\_\_ \*California Quail. . . . . \$50 Family  
 \_\_\_ \*Meadowlark. . . . . \$100  
 \_\_\_ \*Great Horned Owl. . . . . \$250  
 \_\_\_ \*Golden Eagle. . . . . \$500  
 \_\_\_ \*Red-Tailed Hawk. . . . . \$1,000  
 \_\_\_ \*California Condor. . . . . \$2,000

\*These membership categories include family members.



## Education Committee Report



"This is my Dream" group-sourced poem by poet Kwame Alexander will be a part of a "thank you gift" to teachers who have used the NHM as a learning center in the past. Annie L. has created a lovely work of art using the poem which includes a line "where teachers are thanked for their service" and poem lines paying homage to wild fish and monarch butterflies. Each of the 21 teachers will also receive a \$10 Starbucks gift card and a new Museum's brochure.

*Charlotte Ochoa*

Please go to the main library across from the museum and take a look at the display that Charlotte O. Annie L. and Judy G.

created in the library for EARTH DAY 2021. It will be there for the month of April.



## Garden Committee Report



The Garden Committee had their first big work day in March. . .and work hard they did! Pat Chandler transplanted some nonnative geraniums and in their place planted native Pink Yarrow. Nancy Heck and Cynthia Lara dug an enormous hole and planted a 15 gallon Toyon in the planned Channel Islands Garden: they pruned, transplanted lots of Bush Anemone with the hope that in a better location they may become more attractive specimens, raked, swept and more! Lots of laughs as Kathy Sharum was stomping inside a green waste trash can was followed by pizza and garden planning. What fun! An outing to receive a special tour of SLO Botanical Garden will take place May 4th. Kathy Schartz recommended monthly work days from 10-Noon on third Wednesdays. All agreed.. Come and work for as long or short as you can. Interested? Just show up and meet the gang. We'd love to welcome new gardeners. Milkweed is growing, Redbuds are blooming. Spring is here!!

## Our New Advisory Committee



*Librarian*

**Mary Housel** says her nature passion is, "The ocean has been my lifelong "go to" place for internal restoration and peace. Walking along the water, stopping to take in the sights and sounds of ocean animal life, especially at sunset, is my favorite thing to do".



*Attorney*

**Conrad Stephens** says his nature passion is "Exploring the Central Coast's beautiful coastline. I enjoy hiking along our coast lines and coastal ranges. I also love the rush of white-water rafting in the Sierra Nevada mountains".



*SMBSD Administrator*

**Sarah Cameron** says her nature passion is, "We are surrounded by incredible natural beauty here on the Central Coast! I love this time of year with the bright green hills, California poppies, and majestic oaks!"



*CPA*

**Hilda Zacarias** says her nature passion is "I really, really, really love trees! Their smell, their shade, their many colors . . . I am a true tree hugger".



*City Manager*

**Jason Stilwell** says his nature passion is, "I love watching wild birds, the social interaction, curiosity and connection they have with nature and how different species have their unique roles in the botanical ecosystem".



*Chairman, Community Bank*

**Jim Glines** says his nature passion is "I was raised on Rock Front Ranch on the western end of the Cuyama Valley. I've bred, raised, and competitively competed in cutting horses. We are blessed in this beautiful area where wild life abounds".



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www.smnaturalhistory.org

**FACEBOOK;**  
The Natural History Museum of  
Santa Maria  
Please Like Us

**OPEN:**  
Regular hours:  
Wed-Sat 11:00am - 4:00pm  
Winter hours:  
1:00pm - 3:00pm  
Temporarily closed

**FREE ADMISSION**

## THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM'S "NATURE PHOTO CONTEST"

### CONGRATULATIONS, NANCY W.

*2020's winner with her photo of her granddaughter  
and their desert tortoise!*

**Hurry!** This ends June 30, 2021. Submit entries to  
naturalhistory412.santamaria@gmail.com

**Contest:** one "win" per person per year with credit to entrant. Entry  
will imply that the NHM may use the image with credit to the entrant on  
the on Facebook and our website www.smnaturalhistory.org.



Please visit our web-  
site and Facebook as  
often as you can to  
promote the the NHM.  
Thanks!

We sure hope you are  
seeing this on your  
computer as opposed  
to your black & white  
mail copy, *the colors  
are beautiful.*

## RESTORE OUR EARTH IN 2021 Things you can do:

1. Plant narrowleaf milkweed in your backyard. Available (for free) on 4/22/21 from 12-4 at the Natural History Museum.
2. Join an organization that contributes to planting trees.
3. Support our world's leaders to support climate change.
4. Clean and protect our lands and waters. RECYCLE!
5. Join Adopt a Road program with Rec & Parks in Santa Maria.
6. LEARN TO LOVE AND RESPECT NATURE!
7. We just found out that the "glitter" we love to use goes down the drain into our water ways. The fish gobble it up! Sure, its fun but glitter is plastic and sea life is attracted to it and gobble it up!! Please ditch the glitter!





Male Anna's Hummingbird with the magenta crown and gorget and the green-gray breast on belly. Photo Matt Victoria

This year an Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) nested in a tree at the SM Natural History Museum. Anna's hummingbirds are the most common hummingbird in the Santa Maria area during the breeding season and the only expected wintering hummingbird. They are mostly green with a beautiful magenta gorget (throat patch) in the males. The Anna's Hummingbird, as a species, is very versatile and is quite comfortable within human-influenced environments. However, hummingbirds have numerous rather unique behaviors that will not win them the "Father of the Year" award. If you find a nesting bird in your backyard, please take measures to help our feathered friends and protect the nest from disturbance.

North of Gaviota, the only wintering hummingbird is the Anna's Hummingbird which is documented to winter along the coast as far north as British Columbia, Canada. South of Gaviota, Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*) and Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*) will also winter with the Anna's. Allen's are green with a bright orangey-red gorget and a rusty-red vest in males while Costa's males have a dark purple gorget with long pointed corners.



Male Costa's Hummingbird. Photo Matt Victoria



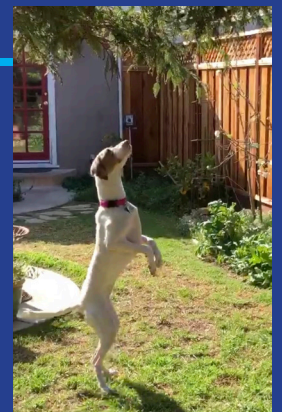
Male Black-chinned Hummingbird. Photo Matt Victoria

During the breeding season, Anna's are by far the most common breeding hummingbird but are also joined by Allen's and Black-chinned Hummingbirds (*Archilochus alexandri*). Black-chinned males have a compact black-dark purple gorget. All these species could be found nesting near people in parks or well vegetated backyards; however, the Anna's is the most expected while the black-chins tend to nest in well-established, stream-side woodlands. Hummingbirds are very territorial and Anna's is larger than either Allen's or Black-chinned Hummingbirds which gives it the advantage in winning battles over prime real estate.

With regards to breeding behavior, hummingbirds win for "deadbeat dad": Male hummingbirds will display for the females and following breeding will do nothing to help the females. The soon to be mother hummingbirds build their nest which has an opening about the size of a nickle covered with lichens, incubate the eggs which are the size of small jelly beans, and raise the young all without help from the male hummingbirds. The males will even chase females and young out of their territory - usually the areas with the best flowers for nectar which is their primary food source although they do eat small insects.

Given the headaches that a poor momma hummingbird has to deal with, if you find a nest, please give it space and try to protect it from people and pets. It only takes Anna's Hummingbirds about two weeks of incubation for the eggs to hatch and another three weeks until the nestlings will leave the nest. Once the young have fledged the nest, there are another few weeks of care by their mothers until they are on their own. If you find a "young-n-dumb" fledgling (of any species) the best course of action is to make sure the young bird is not going to get eaten by a dog or cat and leave them alone. If necessary, move the bird to a dense shrub near where it had been and walk away. In a few minutes it will likely start begging loudly for food and will be found easily by the hard-working parents.

David Kisner, NHM Nature Consultant



"Hunting" dog trying to check out Anna's Hummingbird nest in backyard. Nest was safely above the dog's reach but the dog found the nest on her own.