



Santa Maria, California
"Where Natural History comes to Life"

MEADOWLARK

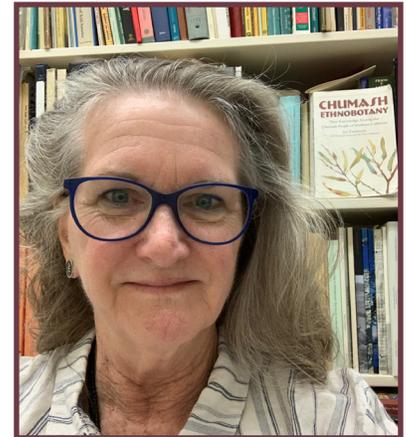
The Fall Equinox 2022 Newsletter

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

It's Autumn 2022 at the The Natural History Museum

And we are pleased to announce that the speaker for our fall event is **Jan Timbrook, Ph.D.** Her PowerPoint lecture is scheduled for **October 8th at 1:00 pm** at the Joslyn Center behind the museum. This will be a great lecture about the Chumash that you won't want to miss. And we hope you will stay afterward to enjoy refreshments and museum garden tours.

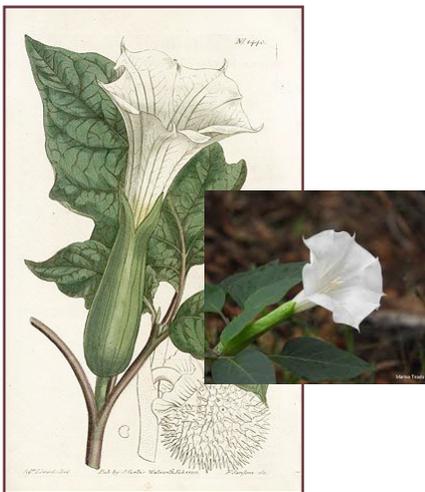
Jan is a renowned anthropologist and ethnobiologist who specializes in the indigenous Chumash. She was the Curator of Ethnography for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History for 45 years.



Jan will be talking about the traditional Chumash Peoples and the role of plants in sustaining their high standard of living for many thousands of years.

Besides the obvious use as food, she'll discuss plants used for baskets, tools, transportation, construction, medicine, and ceremony.

article by NHM Garden committee person, Nancy Heck



Jimsonweed (*Datura wrightii*)

This plant is extremely poisonous but the Indigenous Peoples knew how to use it for inducing visions and to relieve pain. It is probably the most important medicinal plant among the Chumash.



Red Maids (*Calandrinia ciliata*)

The seeds from the Red Maids wildflower were toasted and ground up for food. One of the most expensive Chumash foods highly sought after in trade.



Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)

Coast Live Oaks produce copious amounts of acorns which are considered the best tasting of all oak species. Acorns were the single most important food for the traditional Chumash because they could be dried and stored indefinitely to tide a family over when other food sources weren't readily available. The process of preparing acorns for human consumption was long and tedious.

Let's give a huge SHOUT-OUT to our dedicated docents.

These people are committed to keeping the museum open from Wednesday-Saturday for 5 hours a day (2 1/2 hour shifts). Each docent contributes good information based on their knowledge and interests in nature. **LUIS, KELSIE** and **CRIS** are presently Hancock students. **JACOB** just graduated from Hancock, and is leaving us to attend University of California at Santa Cruz. Having worked at the Cabrillo Aquarium in high school, he has been a tremendous help in organizing our files. He will be sorely missed. **BRENNAN** is a Cal Poly student working on his Master's Degree in history, and **JEREMY** is an author/artist of adult coloring books featuring extinct animals. **BILL, JUDY, RANDALL, MARK,** and **VIRGINIA** are long time docents with a wealth of knowledge. **ANNIE** will sub when needed and **CARMEN** will help when she can at our events. Without these reliable volunteers we couldn't keep the museum open.

If you're interested in volunteering please let us know by dropping into the museum and ask for an application. Fill it out and someone will call you.

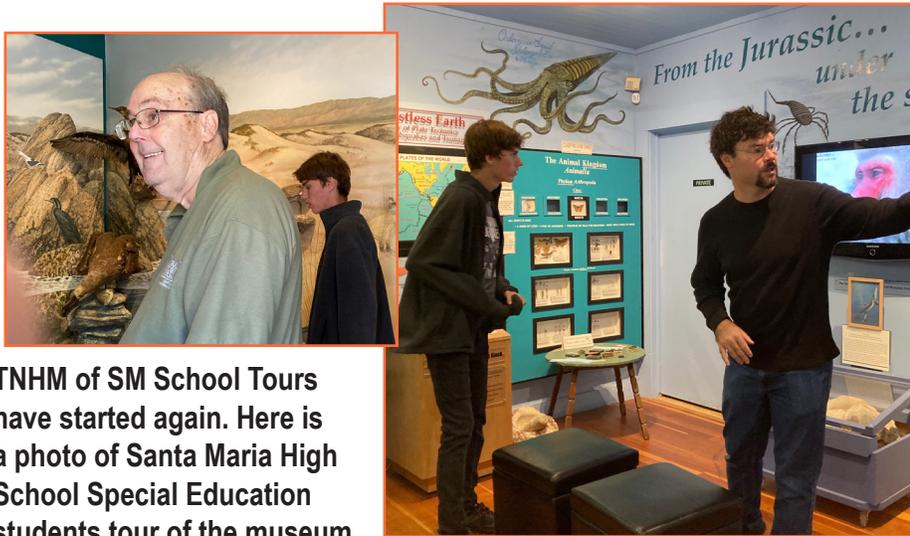
Back row from left to right:
Brennan, Virginia, Mark, Jacob



Front row from left to right:
Judy, Kelsie, Annie, Randall, Bill
(Luis, Cris & Carmen missing from photo)



Goodbye
Jacob,
Good Luck



TNHM of SM School Tours have started again. Here is a photo of Santa Maria High School Special Education students tour of the museum with docents Mark, Jeremy and Luis. An aide from school commented about how much they learned about the earth.



Our 2022 Penny Project could use a boost! Maybe we should call it our "loose change" project. If you collect your nickels, dimes, quarters in a household receptacle or your car (for parking meters, for example), think of dropping them off at the museum, as two visitors did recently.



This is Luke & while visiting the museum with his father, he found an error on the museum's nature question box! Oh my, thanks for finding it for us Luke! We'll fix it!



David Kisner, Nature Consultant, Judy Garrett, President, Virginia Souza, Secretary, Annie Lawrence, Graphic Arts support, Nancy Heck, Treasurer, & Suzanne Hajnik, Education

We are just putting this photo in for fun! We believe this is the first good photo of the complete board of TNH of SM in years. Mostly because of Covid we have and still do Zoom Board Meetings

Red shows where we are to date. HELP Please!
You can go to our website & donate using "Pay Pal".
www.smnaturalmuseum.org **THANK YOU!**

Goldfinches of the Central Coast

by NHM Nature Consultant David Kisner

Lesser Goldfinch



Spinus psaltria

Here on the Central coast, we have three species of goldfinches, and **one odd ball**. The most common of the goldfinches by far is the Lesser Goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*) who is here year-round and can often be found at backyard bird feeders. The American Goldfinch (*S. tristis*) is fairly common in the winter months but goes well north of our area to breed. Then there is the rare and illusive Lawrence's Goldfinch (*S. lawrencei*) who breeds in our area in open grassy woodlands. Lastly, the odd-ball, the Pine Siskin (*S. pinus*) can be found in our area in the winter and can breed in the higher elevation pine woodlands within the Central Coast region.

With a little practice it becomes fairly easy to tell goldfinches apart, however they are very shy and it is often hard to get a good look. With an adult male of each species (see attached photos from the free Merlin app), the amount and location of the black on the head can be diagnostic - the Lesser shows a full black cap from bill to the top of the neck, American shows a black fore-crown to mid head but stops well short of the neck, and the Lawrence's looks like he dove face first into an ink well with black going from chin around the bill and eyes up to the forehead. Overall coloration is also very helpful with the Lesser's showing a yellow-green tone, the American is a rich yellow in the breeding season and a tawny-tan in the winter, and the Lawrence's showing a ash gray on belly and back. As for our Siskin, they show a heavily streaked body with yellow streaks worked into the wings.

For those who are more acoustically inclined, the call notes of the three species can be very helpful especially with a flock of birds flying overhead, which is a common occurrence with goldfinches. The Lesser goldfinch has a sad mournful "peeeer" that slurs downward (hint: Lesser = sad). The American call note sounds like it is saying "potato potato potato-chip and though not as "American" as a hotdog and baseball, potato chips certainly are an American favorite. The Lawrence's Goldfinch flight call is a soft ethereal "tink tink tink-a-loo". Our oddball siskins have a very loud and distinct metallic-buzzy up-slurred "zzzzeeerreeh" call that is easily remembered once heard. The free Merlin app has lots of calls and songs on these species for you to listen to and enjoy.

Lawrence's Goldfinch



Spinus lawrencei

American Goldfinch



Spinus tristis

Pine Siskin



Spinus pinus
coloration in
breeding season

If you are interested in attracting these birds to your yard, I would recommend planting native primrose and various sunflowers. Goldfinches and siskins love the black thistle seed you can buy but these thistle seeds are expensive, require a special "sock" feeder, and there are occasional outbreaks of various bird disease that can severely impact these birds. The plants will attract fewer birds but are far cheaper and should not transmit diseases as readily.

Please make a trip to the museum to sit in the garden, bring your lunch and sit at the umbrella covered table, or bring a book and relax in one of the chairs, It makes for a very delightful, peaceful time.

Hope to see you there!



Pine Siskin coloration in winter



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 The Natural History Museum of
 Santa Maria
 Please Like Us

OPEN:
 Regular hours:
 Wed-Sat 11:00am - 4:00pm

FREE ADMISSION

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Channel Islands Garden in full fall mode, beautiful!



Glenda Stevens-Artist painting steelhead trout heading for our ocean

Progress on the C.R.E.F. Grant continues. The garden committee is keeping an eye on the completed installation of the Channel Islands garden in front near the Little Free Library. It's in fall mode now, but it's still pretty to look at--especially the buckwheat and white sage. My how they grew from tiny plants!

The watershed project, which focuses on the habits of steelhead, rainbow trout, and beavers is well underway, thanks to Glenda Stevens who has been the artist for many of the original murals in the museum. Enhancement of the beaver exhibit, with the assistance of Creek Lands Conservation of Arroyo Grande, will be the contribution of Leslie Anderson.

The large outdoor display of sea creatures is being completely renovated with the addition of a life-sized grey whale breaching (not shown here yet). These will be painted by Glenda and her daughter. You might enjoy stopping by to observe artwork in action!