



THE PONDEROSA

AUGUST 1979

the PINE RIDGE ASSOCIATION
NEWS LETTER



FROM UNDER MY BRIM

This has been a good year for viewing reptiles in the park. The more common reptiles; the Gopher Snake, Aquatic Western Garter Snake, Western Rattlesnake, Western Ringneck Snake, Common Kingsnake, Alligator Lizard, and the Western Fence Lizard, have been common finds. The Western Pond Turtle seems numerous enough to assume that they were not greatly effected by the drought years. There was an Alligator Lizard seen at Black Oak Spring that measured 15 inches in total length. I've seen smaller Alligators. Other not so common sightings include; Striped Racer, Western Skink, Coast Horned Lizard, a large number of Yellow-bellied Racers, the beautifully marked California Mountain Kingsnake, and two rather rare species, the Sharp-tailed Snake (which gets it's name from the sharp spine end to it's tail) and the Night Snake.

In addition to being rare, the Night Snake is also rather unusual. Unlike most California snakes, it's eyes have vertical pupils which hints to the fact that it is nocturnal. It is generally considered that the Rattlesnake is the only poisonous snake of the area, but this is not totally true. The Night Snake is also venomous, although not dangerous to man. Because the Night Snake does not have hollow fangs as the Rattlesnake, he must hold on to his prey for a while so that the venomous saliva can work into the wounds made by the enlarged teeth in the back of the snakes upper jaw. This snake feeds on lizards, salamanders, and insects.

Reptiles are valuable members of the natural community. They keep the number of insects and rodents in control. The Western Rattlesnake eats ground squirrels. If these rodents are allowed to over populate, they become susceptible to disease and parasites such as the flea which carries the Bubonic Plague. As much as he may be disliked, even the Rattlesnake has value to man.

On your next trip to the park you might spend some time looking for and observing these varied; beautiful; interesting; and sometimes disliked residents. Your time will be well spent.

Barry



Recently a Black Bear was seen and eventually captured in the Santa Cruz Mountains. In recent years Black Bears have been seen only rarely in the Coast Range south of Mendocino County. In these areas of higher human population they have been killed for food; sport; because they do some crop damage; and out of fear, although they are not normally considered dangerous to man. The type of bear that was more common in the area that is now the park was the Grizzly Bear. He was so feared that his extinction from the state was complete by the mid 1920's. Sada Coe in her book "The Pine Ridge Country" tells a story of "The Last California Grizzly".

She was the last remaining grizzly in the State of California, and in bewildered fear of her aloneness lived in the wild and remote part of the south Mount Hamilton Range. Slow and lumbering she hunted near her cave for food, never venturing very far from the great rocky ledge that climbed straight up from a narrow creek. Here in a thick timber of pines she made her home.

She had lost her nerve. It happened one year when she and her two half grown cubs were feasting on a tender sheep they had just killed. The old keeper and his dog found them suddenly and without warning slaughtered the two cubs. It was only luck she had been spared, but her heart was broken and old age weakened her strength. All the cattle people knew of her and a price was placed on her head as the last of her species to survive the white man. A horrible fear kept her from roaming the old haunts she once knew. The price was fifty dollars to the first man who brought her head to the valley, but only by shooting would the reward be gained and dogs or poison bait were forbidden in the chase. In spite of her past deeds the old cowmen felt a great respect for the aged grizzly.

A horse trader, however, living in the valley learned of the price of the grizzly's head, and as fifty dollars at the time was considered a small fortune, he set out to gain the prize. He rode far back into the hills until he found the tracks of the old bear where she had been foraging for food. Unable to catch her at a disadvantage, he decided at last to poison the great beast. No one would know, he thought, so taking a freshly killed deer, he applied a few grains of poison to the meat and then waited.

Lumbering along her usual haunt she smelled the fresh blood of the deer and soon came upon its carcass. Hungry and weakened by age, she ate the meat greedily. The poison quickly began its work and the great animal writhed in agony toward her cave, but death was quick and she died within a hundred yards of the deer. Here the horse trader found her, and to make sure that the prize would be his, fired a bullet from his rifle into the dead bear's head, which he then removed and took proudly back to the valley. There was a great excitement over the event, and he flourished for awhile with popularity and fame. Many years passed and after the man's death the true story then became known of the killing of the last California grizzly.

WHAT 'S HAPPENIN'

WE HAVE A NEW TREASURER, MANDY ESCOBEDO. HER ACCOUNTING KNOWLEDGE IS SURE TO PROVE VALUABLE TO THE ASSOCIATION. WE SHOULD ALL THANK HER FOR HER VOLUNTEERING TO FILL THIS POSITION.

MEETING

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE PINE RIDGE ASSOCIATION WILL BE HELD AT DAVE HILDEBRAND'S HOME ON AUGUST 29, 1979 (WEDNESDAY) AT 7:30 PM. DAVE LIVES AT 791 MIDVALE LN. NEAR CAPITOL & PEARL. PHONE : 269-5852

THE PARK MAY BE GROWING SOON

STATE SENATOR A. ALQUIST HAS INTRODUCED LEGISLATION PROPOSING ACQUISITION OF THE 18000 ACRE COIT RANCH LOCATED EAST OF HENRY W. COE S.P. AND THE 1100 ACRE THOMAS RANCH LOCATED NORTH OF THE PARK IN COLD FLAT. THE LEGISLATION HAS CLEARED MOST OF THE HURDLES IN SACRAMENTO, AND WILL COME UP FOR REVIEW BY THE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE LATER THIS MONTH. IF YOU HAVE OPINIONS REGARDING THESE ACQUISITIONS, PASS THEM ON TO SENATOR ALQUIST, AND YOUR ASSEMBLYMAN.