THE PONDEROSA

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter

June 1990

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

California Buckeye

June is a special month—of course every kid can tell you that. At Coe it is special for many reasons, not the least of which is that the buckeyes are blooming.

I looked for information on buckeyes in books but didn't find the kind of information I wanted. They all gave nice descriptions such as: A large shrub or tree to 25 feet with a broad rounded top. Leaves bright green and divided into 5 to 7 leaflets. Flowers white to pale rose, born on an erect, many-flowered thyrse. Fruit pear-shaped, enclosing a glossy, brown seed. Flowers said to be poisonous to bees.

I wanted to know much more about buckeyes. I wanted to know them as I know people, but not "5 feet 10 inches tall, 180 pounds, blue eyes, brown hair, tattoo of a mermaid on the left arm," not "B.A. from Stanford in business administration, five years as a scout master, interested in the out-of-doors...." I wanted to know them as friends, and the only way to do that is to spend time with them.

The first time I tried to get to know a valley oak as a friend, I climbed up, sat down, and immediately jumped out of the tree as ants started crawling all over me. In short order I learned three things: ants like valley oaks, valley oaks don't mind ants, and I wouldn't make a very good oak tree. The first time I tried to make friends with a buckeye, things were different. I found the one I sat in to be gentle, peaceful, and of good nature. Although the whole tree is rough (except new twigs and the very smooth seeds), much of it is covered with lichens and mosses—my seat was a moss-covered throne. I learned that, although they are often called shrubs because they may branch from the base, they truly are trees. I don't think you can sit in a shrub, or at least you would look mighty funny if you tried.

An oak leaf put to your cheek, even on a cold evening, will feel warm. Put a buckeye leaf to your cheek on a cool evening or warm day, and it will feel cool (but even the warmth of your cheek will warm the leaf on the other side in just seconds). Wind through a valley oak makes a strong, deep roar; through a ponderosa pine it is a high, cool, modulating whistle; but it is hard to hear the wind in a buckeye. If you are patient and listen carefully, you can hear its gentle wisp of a voice and occasionally its feather-soft wind chime tune. Most of time there is little wind around buckeyes (or their sound is drowned out by nearby, sheltering oaks or bays). I learned that my friends the buckeyes seek out sheltered spots on cool, north-facing slopes, in protected swales, in the shade of other trees—places where their fragile leaves would not be damaged by too much wind or sun (for after all, with their large, thin, bright green leaves, they do look like trees better suited for the tropics). When the summer wears on, they also do a couple things to help in their survival. First, their leaflets start folding in the middle and the edges face the sun to cut down on the

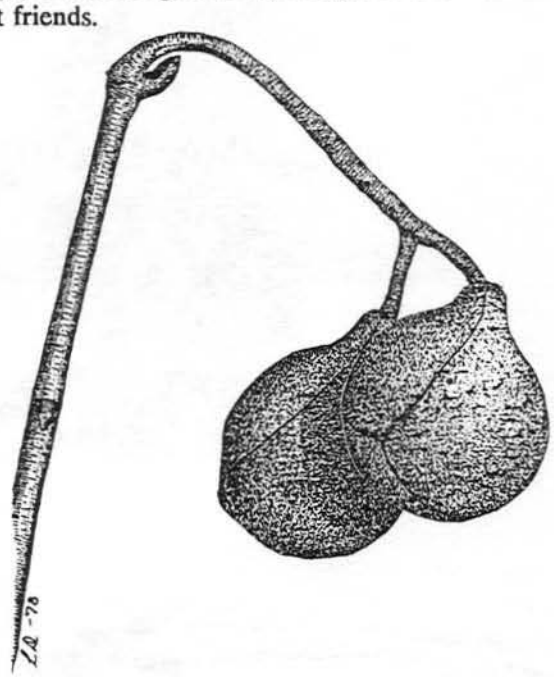
desiccating effects. Second, and later on, they loose their leaves completely—they are summer deciduous.

(Preparation of Lee Dittmann's illustration supported by the Monterey Peninsula Reginal Park District)

These trees are generous. Although the seeds are poisonous and have killed people, ground squirrels eat them with no effect. The tender leaves are relished by deer: you can see a browse line where the trees are cut off flat along the bottom about as high as a deer can reach. I watched a deer feeding on a buckeye. She would stick out her long, wet tongue and pull a whole leaf, 5-7 leaflets worth, into her mouth at once. She even stood up on her hind legs to reach some of the higher leaves.

I guess not everyone knows where the buckeye got its name. The large seeds found inside of the pear-shaped pods are shiny brown and look just like a buck's eye, even having a round spot that looks like a pupil. Books say that the Indians used the seeds for food in years when there were few acorns but had to leach them for a long time to remove the strong poison Aesculin. The books also say that the Indians mashed the seeds and put them in streams to stupefy fish—I will take the books' word for these things. I have my doubts, however, about books' claims that the flowers are poisonous to bees. I watched honeybees as well as a half dozen of their native relatives ravenously feeding on the flowers and didn't find a single dead bee under the tree. Also feeding on the nectar, and better suited to the job with their long, tubular mouths, were at least a dozen different types of butterflies and a myriad of other insects (there was even a clear-winged moth imitating a bumblebee). Two of the butterflies were even doing a beautiful mating dance right on the flowers.

Like the insects, I am drawn to this gentle tree by its bright foliage and beautiful, candelabra flowers. I am attracted even more powerfully by the flowers' perfume. This scent, the most wonderful I have ever smelled, is both fleeting and intimate—it is a gift given by special friends. Now is a great time to take a walk at Coe. If you do, walk slowly, breathe deeply, enjoy the blessings of June, and get to know some of my closest friends.



Ponderosa Pines and the Hand of Man

by Dennis Pinion

In the March 1990 edition of *The Ponderosa,* I explained how the drought, accompanied by other natural factors, can initiate a bark beetle epidemic resulting in the loss of numerous Ponderosa pines.

Natural factors that predispose trees to bark beetle attack include age, drought, flooding, root disease, dwarf mistletoe, and mechanical injuries caused by wind, lightning, and fire. Other factors and physiological stresses are man-made. Fortunately, trees in state and national parks are protected from these unnatural factors. Or are they?

Fire, air pollution, and exotic animals are unnatural factors that have affected or may be affecting Ponderosa pines in Henry Coe State Park and elsewhere. But, you say, fire is a natural factor! Of course it is. Its absence is unnatural. We have been suppressing forest fires to protect the forests for the past 100 years. Only recently have we begun to realize that fire plays a critical role in the forest ecosystem. By removing fire, we have disturbed the balance, possibly causing more harm than good.

All plants have developed mechanisms for dealing with fire. Some, like the junipers, live in inhospitable but relatively fire proof locations.

Other species, such as Ponderosa, survive frequent, low intensity fires, because they have a relatively thick protective bark. These trees depend on the fires to remove shrubs and grass that compete for the limited supply of water and nutrients. They also depend on fire to remove the litter from the forest floor so their seeds can germinate. Without fire, these trees would not be able to reproduce and would eventually die out.

Some other species with thin bark do not expect to survive the fire. Yet they, too, depend on fire for their existence. In fact, they can deal with higher intensity fires. They simply keep their seeds protected in cones that remain closed until opened by the heat of a forest fire.[1] Due to this habit, they are able to quickly reestablish themselves after the fire has removed their competitors (and parents) from the area. Without fire, these trees would not be able to reproduce and would eventually die out.

However, the role of fire in the forest is more complex. Fires do more than remove competing vegetation. Fire generally does not burn consistently through a forest. Instead, it creates a mosaic pattern, burning some areas while leaving others untouched. It thins out seedlings and removes dead and dying trees. In the process, it may destroy pathogenic agents, leaving the forest cleaned and rejuvenated.

But, you say, fire is a natural factor! Of course it is. Its absence is unnatural.

Fires started by lightning generally begin at the top of ridges and burn slowly down slope. Unless fanned by the wind, the progress of the fire is slow, since most of the heat is carried up across the area just burned, not across unburned fuel.

Fire suppressed is fire delayed, not prevented. Pine needles, broken branches, and fallen trees accumulate on the ground while the understory continues to spread. Some of the dead material is decomposed through the action of insects, bacteria, and fungi, returning nutrients to the forest floor. But this is a slow process—especially in semiarid coniferous forests due to the low nutrient requirements (and contents) of conifers, acidic soil, and the lack of moisture so necessary for fungi.

The intensity of the next fire increases with the accumulating fuel load as does the difficulty of extinguishing the fire once it starts. The result may be one very hot, catastrophic fire that destroys virtually all of the vegetation—perhaps leaving the area altered for decades to come.

The great Yellowstone Park fire of 1988 is an example of good intentions gone awry. From the 1880s to the 1970s, park policy called for the immediate suppression of all fires. The result was a 90-year buildup of fuel, which finally burned. However, the damage was not as tragic as first thought. The serotinous cones on the burned lodge pole pines immediately reseeded the forest. Other pyric plants reappeared, creating an almost unprecedented wild flower display. Nature, it seems, had a plan.

So, what are we doing about the accumulated fuel load at Coe? Prescription burns. These are fires intentionally set under controlled conditions to limit the intensity of the fire while still removing the fuel. This is accomplished in the fall or early spring by first clearing the fuel from around important trees and then waiting for the proper weather conditions (these are relative humidity of at least 20 percent, temperature below 75 degrees Fahrenheit, and a wind forecast not to exceed 15 mph.).

To see an area that would benefit from a prescription burn, walk down to the small stand of Ponderosa pines at the beginning of the Springs Trail (near the corral). You will notice that there are no Ponderosa seedlings or saplings in this area due to the thick layer of duff and litter on the ground.

In a future issue of *The Ponderosa*, I will discuss air pollution and how it may interact with drought, dwarf mistletoe, and root rot to the detriment of the Ponderosas.

[1] Cones that remain closed and attached to the tree are called serotinous cones. The seeds in serotinous cones may remain viable for up to twenty years.

More about California Ground Squirrels—at Coe

by Marlene Testaguzza

One winter day, a squirrel climbed, in stages, to the top of a tall valley oak tree. She sniffed around a bit, then stretched, yawned, and settled down on her chosen sturdy branch. Facing west, she relaxed in the warm sun. A gentle breeze blew now and then; it was an idyllic afternoon. When I left, she was still there.

Another day, in early spring, a squirrel bounded along the ground, encountered a dry dirt road, took a dirt bath, then ran up a nearby moderately tall blue oak tree. He crawled quickly out on a limb, nibbled a few new green leaves and perhaps an insect or two, then ran back down the tree and disappeared into the grassland.

In late spring, a lone squirrel pup climbed half-way up a small blue oak tree, seemed surprised at what she had done, turned around and ran back down to the ground. In another area of the park, three pups emerged from a hollow (about six feet up) in a huge valley oak tree. They proceeded to play in the large thick branches of the tree. They did become quiet now and then, groomed, listened, even froze at some disquieting sight or sound. But soon they'd resume playtime. And that is what they were doing when I left.

On a hot summer day, squirrels scurried down into their ground burrows while one or two stood their ground and sounded alarm calls. But one individual shot up a large oak tree trunk, almost to the top where he disappeared into a hole! A short while later, he reappeared, head only, eyes alert. When I left, he was still there. I photographed this unusual event (an enlargement is in the wildlife album at headquarters). I have been back twice since then, and the same behavior occurred.

It is known that California ground squirrels do climb into bushes and trees for sunning, but to the tops? And what of the other interactions with trees? They may be uncommon. The squirrels may be adapting, incorporating trees for food and shelter. There may be a vacant niche; tree squirrels are absent in the observed areas. Would there be competition or avoidance if both were present? Both use similar food sources; both use the ground.

Another possible adaptation is as follows. In some areas of the park where the soil has a reddish tone, there are reddish-colored squirrels. In other areas of the park where there are straw-colored meadows for much of the year, there are pale-colored squirrels. This color adaptation could help protect against predators. Individual behaviors, recessive genes, variations? Or evolution, natural selection? I find it interesting to consider!

Downstairs in the Visitor Center: Past and Present

by Jane Tracey

On any given day recently, by peering diligently through a window (if the shade is up and the light right), a curious visitor might be rewarded with a glimpse of Kathy Paivinen's[2] wondrous artistic talent in the form of her oak savanna wildlife mural, various suspended cut-out silhouettes of Coe's predatory birds, several display cases, or perhaps a volunteer or two taking their lunch break.

In the early 1980s, the Coe Park volunteers of that period, encouraged by Ranger Barry Breckling and District Superintendent Ray Jenkins, remember fondly the downstairs as bustling with activity. Enthusiasm ran high. Interested folk wielded paint brushes, laid tile, washed and waxed the floor, set up natural history displays in cases especially built for the purpose. On each bench, Judy Mason painted tracks in black of the park's four-footed critters. Following this came the tedious job of applying several coats of stain and varnish. A cork-board wall was erected, providing a backdrop for paintings featuring scenes of Coe that artists participating in the annual Art Show donated. Replacing the white wall on which slides were projected, a screen was purchased as well as a projector and other equipment. Marlene Testaguzza's collection of freeze-dried bird and animal specimens continue to be extremely popular with visitors. Several pairs of hands periodically dug in to make order out of chaos in the back room, which has always been a "catch all" and "Fibber McGee's closet." (Those over sixty will remember him—Oh, but that only leaves yours truly, doesn't it?)

Sadly, I fear that stagnation has crept in. For too long, downstairs has become a place for an occasional meeting, training area, Saturday night slide show, or the route to pass through in search of supplies. Those of us who have had the pleasure and satisfaction of opening the room to the public on rare occasions have been rewarded with enthusiastic response. Visitors seem delighted and appreciative to view the displays and the interpretation there of. Questions were asked and answered in a more relaxed and unhurried setting...as all realize that the upstairs visitor center becomes mighty hectic during peak seasons.

Long-range Plans

According to Chief Ranger Kay Schmidt-Robinson, the state intends to expand the downstairs area. District Superintendent Harry Batlin informed the PRA Board that at the present time a professional architect in Sacramento is at work designing the extension to the building, which will extend twenty to twenty-five feet out and run the length of the building. Plans call for the relocation of the rest rooms in the extension. The PRA Board has agreed to halt for now preparing any new permanent displays until the above has been completed.

Interim Plans

The downstairs committee, consisting of Bonnie Larsen, Margaret Enns, and Marlene Testaguzza, plans soon to

feature "Life in a Log," a rotten log display, depicting how nature recycles and its effect on animal, bird, plant, and insect life. The oak habitat is the centerpiece of the park, and the oak savanna should be stressed, Barry Breckling tells us. 1990 has been proclaimed "The Year of the Oak" by the California Oak Foundation, deeply concerned that all oaks in the state are threatened. In Coe, two oaks, the stately valley and the blue, are on the "critical list," so to speak. Expanding on this theme, the committee intends to replace and upgrade the current oak leaf foliage display, which has deteriorated with age.

Being blessed with an ever-growing pool of talented volunteers, what a grand opportunity to share the downstairs room with our visitors before the construction begins!

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[2] Kathy has achieved national recognition for her wildlife and domestic animal paintings. She also designed the Coe Park T-shirts and note papers.

In conjunction with the above article, the following is Kay Schmidt-Robinson's reply to a letter interview by Jane Tracey.

by Kay Schmidt-Robinson

On March 27, Harry Batlin met a Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) architect at the Coe visitor center. They discussed the proposal for the extension to the lower level. After much discussion and many proposed alternatives, a floor plan was developed. The proposed addition will be 25 feet wide by 50 feet long (the full length of the existing building). The floor plan proposes one large display room of 35 feet by 50 feet, a sales item storage room, and a combination research/training/audiovisual room. The addition requires the relocation of the rest rooms to an outside wall. A wide porch across the front of the building and narrower porch down the side from the upper level are planned. Handicapped accessibility will be by a concrete path from the parking lot to the porch.

Initial funding for this project is from the Volunteer Enhancement Program. For Gavilan District to be eligible for these funds, there must be complementary funding or action by the volunteer association. The architectural design (Phase I) is funded and underway. Phase II will be construction. Through the enhancement program, DPR will contribute $40,000 in each of two fiscal years for such construction, but the construction will also require a fund-raising effort to raise matching funds. Volunteer contributions of capital or construction efforts will fulfill the "matching" criteria for volunteer involvement.

The display room will have maximum wall space, a video screen monitoring area, a through-the-wall slide/movie projection system, movable seating space, free-standing displays, wall displays, and murals. No plans have yet been made for what displays will be developed. Funding for the displays of Phase III has not yet been secured.

The Visitors' Voice

by Dennis Pinion

During the first five months of 1990, visitors to Henry Coe State Park provided the following comments via our "Trail and Camp Use Survey" form. These comments provide some insight into the diverse and sometimes conflicting desires of park visitors. They may also provide some ideas for future volunteer projects.

TICKS!

Great. Better than expected.

Our visit was as good as expected but more vertical. A (bicycle) trail traversing the southwest side of Blue Ridge would be a great, long, single track.

It was really fun. Water fountains and more benches along the trails would be nice.

Keep the park primitive. We believe difficult access will help preserve the natural beauty of the park. Please keep bikes off the trails—dangerous to hikers and equestrians. Bikes can use the jeep roads.

We went for day use and enjoyed a long afternoon.

Surprised to see outhouses in the backpacking camps! Who needs 'em! Perhaps reduce the number? Trails are excellent the way they are!

Need to get poison oak off some trails—really bad on the trail between Manzanita Point and China Hole. More signs (with distances) in the back country would be nice. We went to Kelly Lake by mistake. More information about what is available in the wilderness area would be helpful. Great place!

Need signs beyond Coit Lake going to Mississippi Lake or Pacheco Creek!! Better maps too! The park is nice and clean!

Someone needs to slop around Frog Lake with a heavy duty plastic trash bag. Widely scattered stuff in, around, and up from the lake.

Coe was recommended to me by a friend about three weeks ago. I was not sure what to expect. I was more impressed with the topography and vegetation than I thought I would be. Additional trails are not needed at this time. Your trail system seems extensive when combined with the fire roads. The park is open-country enough so that knowledgeable people should be able to travel off-trail, cross-country between destinations. Any chance of offering an orienteering class, say once a quarter? What is most needed, and would be MOST desirable, is an accurate and current mating of your trail and fire road map with a 7.5' topographic map.

The trail to China Hole is badly rutted; the Willow Ridge trail is somewhat rutted. Note: mountain bikes, with their knobby tires, rip up steep trails when they brake. Confine bikes to the roads. Another entrance at the east side of the park would help reach the eastern sites. Keep it rugged.

Coe is a great place. The best park in the Diablo range by far. It would be nice to open up the Bell Station entrance for people (like me) in the San Joaquin Valley.

The Gavilan District Update

by Harry Batlin, District Superintendent

I would like to update the members of the Pine Ridge Association on the status of development in Coe Park and to provide information about district matters that may interest association members.

The Orestimba facility is back on track after a sudden adjustment midstream. The cost of the plan that was submitted by the Office of the State Architect was about one-third higher than the amount that was budgeted. It was decided to take another look at the project, add several items that had been omitted from the original proposal (such as the contact station at Bell Station and barricades along the road to keep four-wheel drive vehicles out of the back country), and resubmit the entire development as a new project. It turned out that there was not enough money in the bond act to cover the increase in costs. So, back to the drawing board.

The determination was to request a small increase in funding and to accomplish the work that can be done with available funding. As a result, a trailer has been moved to Bell Station, and improvements are being made to it. Part of the development money will be used to provide two rest rooms, to grade the parking area, and to create and install interpretative/informational panels. Most of the mapping plans and specifications have been completed. Once the funding has been approved, the work can begin. The best estimate for completion of that work is spring 1992.

We have recently interviewed candidates for the Maintenance Chief position; we hope to fill the position by July. This job is very important. The Maintenance Chief designs projects and supervises ongoing work. Additional job responsibilities include writing contracts and handling hazardous material. Kay Schmidt-Robinson has done an outstanding job in keeping the maintenance program on track during recent months.

Severe budget constraints have recently been put into place because of state budget deficits. Unfilled positions are being left vacant to make salary savings. We are fortunate that an exception is being made for the district; we have been given permission to fill one of the two vacant Ranger I positions and the Heavy Equipment Operator position.

More on the Bell Station Entrance

by Kay Schmidt-Robinson

If you have been by the Bell Station entrance on Highway 152, you saw some major changes there in the last few months. Our entrance road has been relocated to just south of the Bell Station Café. During January the state acquired title to 38 acres at Bell Station. Thirty-one of these acres are the roadway (a 100'-wide strip) from Highway 152 to the "Shaeirn gate." This completes park ownership all the way from Highway 152 to the Dowdy Ranch. The other seven-acre parcel is on the knoll above the café. In April we installed a mobil trailer there to serve as a temporary kiosk.

Our Sacramento office is developing a contract that will go out to bid this month for improvement of the road and development at the Orestimba Corral. The improvements will be potable and nonpotable water systems, vault toilets, parking areas for day use and overnight dispersed camping vehicles, and a septic system. A solar water pump is proposed for pumping nonpotable water into an underground concrete tank.

This construction contract is scheduled to begin this fall, with completion anticipated in May 1991. Actual public use of the area is not anticipated until mid-1991 at the earliest. When opened to the public, this entrance will provide easier access into the center of the park, a little-explored region for almost all of our visitors up to this time. There are many operational considerations to be worked out, such as some health and safety issues. In the future, the work of our PRA volunteers could extend to visitor reception, patrol, and interpretative programs in this corner of the park. This may expand our volunteer program by drawing from the Hollister and Central Valley areas.

PRA Board Notes
by Barbara Bessey

The PRA Board of Directors met on Tuesday, May 8, at the home of Bill Frazer. Treasurer Jim Mason discussed the financial status of the Pine Ridge Association for the first and second quarters of the year. He also presented a summary of the costs and income associated with the association's various fund-raising events from 1985 through 1989.

The board voted not to have a Coe Art Show this year. Instead, alternatives to the art show were discussed, such as having an artist workshop in the back country. The long-term prospects for the traveling art show were discussed. The show was initially put together to disseminate information about Coe Park through art. The need for additional help was expressed, so that the show can travel to organizations in the north bay area.

The use of the back country by Coe Park volunteers and PRA members was discussed. While it is important for individuals to know what facilities are available for their use, there is also a need to set up guidelines for back country use of the park—whether it be for use of personal vehicles, patrol in state vehicles, or patrol on horseback, by bicycle, or on foot.

A proposal was presented about multiple membership levels; further discussion will take place at the next meeting, after an assessment has been made of the extent to which the current basic dues cover the operating costs of the newsletters and other association mailings.

The next meeting of the Board will be on Friday, June 22, at the home of Barbara Bessey: 127 Glenwood Avenue, Woodside. Maps are available from her (415/851-7813). All PRA members are invited to attend.

COE PARK NEEDS YOU!

Did you know that many of the individuals staffing the visitor center or patrolling the back country are volunteers and not paid employees of the state? Coe Park has more than 80 individuals—members of the Pine Ridge Association—who volunteer time each year to work in the visitor center, lead interpretative walks and hikes, present evening programs, patrol the back country, plan and work at special events sponsored by the association, and assist the regular park employees.

Persons who are interested in joining the volunteer program at Coe will receive extensive training on how to put on interpretative programs as well as training in the individual subject matter areas. If you like learning about the world around you and sharing your experiences with park visitors, then fill out an application to become a member of the next class of volunteers. Applications are now being accepted for the volunteer training that will start in October.

In the next article, Roberta Wright, a Senior Volunteer and member of the Coe Park Volunteer Committee, describes the training program that will be offered to the next class of volunteers. Judy Mason, a Senior Volunteer who has donated more than 2,000 hours to various park activities and the development of programs on wildflowers and plants, shares her feelings about what life is like as a volunteer.

Send for your application today and join the extended family of Coe Park volunteers!

An Invitation to Join the Volunteer Program
by Roberta Wright

Are you interested in learning more about Henry W. Coe State Park—its history, interesting animals, beautiful wildflowers and plants? Would you be willing to share your knowledge with park visitors? Then you may wish to consider donating some of your time as a member of the Volunteer Program of the Pine Ridge Association.

Volunteers receive free admission to the park for themselves and their families on days they work, receive discounts on purchases from the PRA, and, more importantly, receive the satisfaction derived from doing a job well and providing a necessary service to the public and to the park that would not be possible without the volunteers. In addition, most volunteers find that the initial orientation training and the continuing workshops and classes offered for volunteers each year are of significant value.

The Volunteer Program adds to the park visitor's knowledge, interest, enjoyment, and safety by assisting regular park employees through interpretation, operation of the visitor center, patrolling, and special projects. Volunteers must be members of the PRA and must donate a minimum of 50 hours service each year, at least 24 hours of which must be spent staffing the visitor center.

Applications are available at Coe headquarters, and interviews will be scheduled for applicants. Training will be at the park on weekends. Below is the tentative schedule for this year.

Volunteer Required Training Schedule for 1990-91

Thursday, Sept. 6: Interviews in Morgan Hill (City Corp Community Room, Tennant Station)

Saturday, Sept. 8: Alternate interviews at Coe Park (downstairs in the interpretative room)

Saturday, Oct. 6: Initial training

Sunday, Oct. 7: Interpretation training

Saturday/Sunday, Oct. 20/21: Ride-along (back country tour and campout)

Saturday, Nov. 3: Animals and plants

Saturday, Nov. 17: History of Coe

Saturday, Dec. 1: Being a volunteer

Saturday or Sunday of your choice in January: Individual on-the-job training at the visitor center

Saturday, Feb. 9: PRA mandatory meeting and volunteer graduation

Optional Training (dates and times to be determined)

First aid (all volunteers must be certified in first aid)
First aid on the trail
CPR
Wildflowers
Birds
Planning a program
How to set up a slide show
Review of visitor center duties
Orienteering
Discovery hike
Ecology
Tracking

Sharing the Treasure
by Judy Mason

Finding a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow is a dream we would all like to realize. It would give us great joy to spend it.

But then you realize it's everyone's treasure to share, and you're one of the lucky persons to distribute the wealth. Henry Coe State Park is that pot of gold, just waiting to be discovered, shared, and enjoyed. The excitement of discovering those treasures and the joy of sharing them is my volunteer paycheck.

A Rainy Weekend in Coe
by Steven Jung

Last weekend, I had the pleasure and displeasure of going packing into the back country of Henry Coe State Park. With two of the park's volunteers, who graciously allowed me to accompany them on patrol, I set out with enthusiasm. I completely discounted the rumors that rain was likely on Sunday. While I have lived in California, it had never rained on Memorial Day weekend, and, given the glorious Saturday morning with sapphire blue sky and a few puffy white clouds, I decided it was not likely to do so.

As we walked down Middle Ridge Trail to Poverty Flat, I expressed amazement to my companions. My last visit to Coe had been over 20 years ago, leaving memories of a hot, dusty, lifeless place. Yet this reality completely differed from those memories. The mariposa lilies sparkled. Dozens of different birds disclosed their presence with their distinctive songs. As two deer bounced into the underbrush, our conversation touched on the recently reintroduced pronghorn, and golden eagles, waterfowl, and gray foxes. Lunch at misnamed Poverty Flat was a treat, as we lolled in the sun, listened to the creek, and watched as a mother Black-headed Grosbeak fed insects to her young in a nearby tree. From the volunteers, I learned to discriminate the Valley Oak (deep rounded lobes) from the Black Oak (deep pointed lobes) and to recognize the unobtrusive Blue Oak. I speculated on the mystery of clusters of Ponderosa Pine: what quirk of nature placed them here, so far from the Sierras? Then to China Hole, up The Narrows, a glimpse of Eagle Pines, a soaring Turkey Vulture, a nap on the warm sand at Los Cruzeros, the furtive gobble of a turkey tom. Finally, up to the jewel of Lost Springs and its odd little abandoned outhouse with the carefully crafted half moon on its door. But wait, were those clouds on the horizon?

Yes. After dinner, I thought I'd better put the rain fly on the tent, because it might shower overnight. And it did—nice pitty-pats on the fly to hasten sleep. Morning would bring the sun again.

Wrong. Rain, and more rain. The displeasure began when I decided at midmorning that we were not going to be able to wait it out. After a quick breakfast with my companions in their crowded tent, I wadded up the entire sodden mess of my tent and attached it, dripping, to my backpack. Slipping and sliding, we began the trek back to the visitor

center. The miles we had covered with ease the day before extracted a far greater toll on the way back. Better skip Madrone Soda Springs trail—a thundershower might endanger the stream crossings! Up the steep China Hole trail grade then, with water sloshing inside my boots, finally arriving breathless and cold, not to warm up until home provided a hot shower and dry clothes.

Needless to say, now I have a new mental picture of Henry Coe State Park. Neat place!

Gazing at Glory[3]

by Christi Holmes

Why do we sit and stare at sunsets?
Is it that they are the end of today—
Or are we fascinated by the dawning of tomorrow?
It is the passing of our lives,
The glory of the unfolding millennia,
And the passion of souls to be born.
As we sit and gaze into the fiery twilight
Do we see the magnificence of life
In ourselves and those around us
And feel the fire in our hearts and souls?
When we look to the sunset
Are we searching only to find the beauty in
A sky lit dimly by the dying sun?
Or are we looking unsuspectingly
For the peace, solitude, and radiance
Found at the end of a long journey begun at birth
And the glory of a new life in light?

[3] Copyrighted, used with permission of the poet.

Let the Good Times Roll!

And roll they did at the Association's events this spring. This year's **Mother's Day Breakfast** was a huge success—35 volunteers helped to plan and carry out the event where more than 300 breakfasts were served. Attendees were serenaded by the popular banjo and fiddle duo, the Cat and the Fiddle. Approximately 20 children and their parents ventured forth in the rain for the annual **Kid's Day at Coe**. They had a great time listening to stories, making (and eating) homemade ice cream, getting an "up close and personal" look at some wild animals, and going on nature hikes. The **back country Pacheco hike** for PRA members was an unforgettable experience. Receiving special permission to start from the Dowdy Ranch in the southeastern part of the park, a small group hiked to Pacheco Falls for a quick dip and, later that evening, hiked part of the Burra Burra trail by moonlight. The vistas were spectacular, and the birds (including a golden eagle) were in abundance. If you missed this hike, you will have another opportunity for a back country experience in August (see the Burra Burra hike described below).

Take advantage of the activities offered by your association—you will have lots of fun and will meet many wonderful people.

Photo Contest Deadline Nears

by Bonnie Larsen

Don't forget that June 30 is the deadline for submitting slides to the Coe postcard contest. All shutter bugs should mail or bring their entries to Barry Breckling at the Coe Park Headquarters by the end of June. There is no entry fee, and you can submit as many entries as you like. The winner of the contest will receive a framed 11 x 14 enlargement of the winning photograph courtesy of the Pine Ridge Association, plus a dozen genuine postcards. The winner will also be honored at the Postcard Award Ceremony, which is described below. Don't forget the words of encouragement that were included in the last issue of *The Ponderosa:*

> Spring is sprung.
> The time is now.
> We need a Coe card.
> And how.

Think about it.

Join the Moonlight Daylight Burra Burra Hike Hike!

by Lee Sims

All Pine Ridge members and their families are invited to an outing at the Dowdy Ranch at the eastern edge of Coe Park on Saturday, August 4. The Dowdy Ranch is reached along a six-mile dirt road from Bell Station on Pacheco Pass. Arrive at the Dowdy by 4 pm. We will have a hot barbecue available for cooking dinner. Also bring drinking water and stuff to camp out overnight. The Dowdy has running water and toilets but no electricity.

We will eat at about 6 pm. Steve Knepper has promised to bring fresh corn for dinner also. Hot water and coffee will be provided Sunday morning.

At about sunset, we will begin a two- to three-hour moonlight walk around Burra Burra on the old roads. The total distance is about 2.5 miles. There are short distances of steep up and down—easier though than hiking to the Monument. The moon will be two days shy of full, so we hope to have a flashlightless walk. The next morning we will repeat the hike in full daylight before it gets too hot.

The vistas are spectacular! From Burra Burra, you can see Pine Ridge and Headquarters, Blue Ridge, Bolinger Ridge, the Lick Observatory, Red Mountain, Mt. Stakes, Bear Mountain and Bear Mountain Peak, Snod and Grass Peaks, Mustang Peak, Pacheco Falls, and more. And the views south and west are equally as magnificent. This trip is a tremendous opportunity to get a better understanding of the geography and scope of the park.

Part of the roads we are taking is probably an old native American trail. In the silence of moonlight, we may be carried back hundreds of years to the sound of the wind in the grass and a people in touch with the land.

Coe Frog has also indicated a desire to attend. Meet him on Sunday.

Please wear the best hiking shoes you have. Binoculars will also be helpful, as will a flashlight at camp. However, we will try to do the whole walk without the aid of artificial light. The night hike is not recommended for small children.

Call Roberta Wright (408/683-2219), Judy Mason (408/287-6224), or myself (209/383-7848) if you wish to attend. You may arrive Friday evening if you wish, although nothing is yet planned during the day on Saturday.

Don't miss this gem of an evening!

Another Overnight Outing for PRA Members
by Lee Sims

If the moonlight daylight Burra Burra hike hike doesn't double your pleasure, how about double double esses and double pees as in Mississippi?

Save the weekend of September 29 and 30 for a work party and fun time at Mississippi Lake. Tentative plans are to leave most vehicles at the Dowdy Ranch and car pool to Mississippi Lake Saturday morning, leaving the Dowdy at 8:30 am. After getting to Mississippi, we will split into work groups to pull out barbed wire and repaint the ramada and other projects yet to be determined. The work will be strenuous for those wanting to be strenuous and more relaxed for others.

We will camp Saturday night at Mississippi Lake. Your camping gear will be brought out to Mississippi from the Dowdy in a truck. The evening meal will be "catered," and all drinks will be supplied. The cost will be $4.00 per person for dinner and some drinks—heavy consumers of beverages will be asked to add to the "kitty." Sunday morning coffee and hot water will be provided. As yet there are no plans to provide breakfast, so bring your own.

If you have not spent the night at Mississippi Lake, this could be a wonderful chance to enjoy its evening sights and sounds: noisy coots, plopping ducks, swooping tree swallows, the cry of the red-wing blackbird, a gibbous moon, and maybe some oohs and ahhs of happy PRA members.

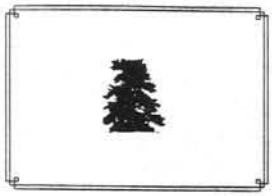
In the event that *The Ponderosa* is not published again before this trip, a phone tree or a special notice will inform you of final plans. Call Judy Mason (408/287-6224), Roberta Wright (408/683-2219), or me (209/383-7848) to sign up. Because we have to plan for food, we need definite replies by September 24.

Also, would someone like to take charge of the dinner? I'd be happy to work with someone to coordinate the purchasing and preparation of the food for this trip.

The First Annual (and Undoubtedly Last) Postcard Award Ceremony, Slide-off, and Potluck Day at Coe
by Barry Breckling

Come join the fun on Saturday, August 18, starting at 1 pm. Bring a dish to share, beverages, and tableware. If you want to show off some of your slides, bring no more than five of your best. We will also be showing the slides of the entrants in the postcard competition and awarding the winner the grand prize. Other awards will also be given.

This is an event you won't want to miss! For further information, call the Coe Park headquarters (408/779-2728).



PRA Artist to Show Works of Coe

Dave Sellers, a Pine Ridge Association member and a well-known artist, will show his latest paintings at a show in Morgan Hill on Sunday, August 19. Visitors to Coe Park already know Dave's work—the mountain lion smiling from the wall behind the check-in desk at the headquarters is one of his paintings. On display at the show will be a series of landscapes of the local area, including a number of paintings of Coe Park scenes.

Dave has received acclaim for his paintings of birds and wildlife. Recently, he was selected as artist of the year by California Ducks Unlimited and was commissioned to do two paintings for them.

Come and meet Dave at the August 19th show and see his latest works of art. The show will take place from noon until 5 pm at the Goose Pond Gallery. The gallery is located at 17375 Monterey Road in Morgan Hill. Inquiries and additional information may be obtained from Boykin Sellers, the gallery's owner, by calling (408) 779-4306.

See you there!

Don't Miss the Fall BBQ

by Roberta Wright

Summer isn't quite here yet, but it's never too early to start thinking about our annual PRA Fall BBQ. This year will be the eighth year that the Pine Ridge Association has offered an all-you-can-eat Santa Maria style steak barbecue. All-you-can-eat hot dog dinners will also be available. All meals include BBQ beans, grilled bread, and salad. Soft drinks, beer, and wine will be available for a nominal price.

The BBQ is scheduled for Saturday, September 22, at Coe Park from 12 noon to 2 pm. Due to the critical fire danger, it will be held at the headquarters area again this year instead of Manzanita Point. For those who do not wish to check out the new, almost completed, scenic foot trail, there will be the renowned hay trucks to transport people from the group parking lot to the visitor center via the road.

A $10 donation ($3.50 for a hot dog dinner) entitles you to a fantastic meal, a day filled with entertaining slide shows, various programs, and the ever-popular nature walks. To order tickets, send your check along with your name and address to PRA, Henry Coe State Park, P.O. Box 846, Morgan Hill, CA 95038. If you include a self-addressed, stamped envelope, your tickets will be sent to you. Otherwise, you can pick up your tickets at the BBQ "will call" desk at the park on the day of the BBQ. NOTE: No tickets will be sold at the BBQ, so please mail in your request for tickets now!

Call Margaret Enns (408/779-1461) or me (408/683-2219) if you have questions or if you would like to help in planning or working at the BBQ. Don't miss this fun-filled event!

For Sale in the Visitor Center

Shrubs of Henry W. Coe State Park, written by Lee Sims, is a very readable and useful resource for identifying shrubs within the park. The booklet presents the reader with several choices between two descriptions in determining the kind of shrub. All choices in the key are stated in terms that lay readers can readily understand. The excellent drawings by Judy Mason enable you to determine whether the "keyed out" specimen has any resemblance to the actual shrub. Several mini-keys are also presented for identifying some of the common shrubs in the park, including thorny or prickly shrubs, vine shrubs, shrubs found in chaparral, and a mini-key based on leaf shape.

Priced at $5.69 plus tax (minus a ten-percent discount for PRA members), this volume is a must for anyone who would like to know about shrubs in the park.

How to Contribute to the Newsletter

Do you have a special Coe experience that you would like to share with the readers of *The Ponderosa*? Or do you have a question about plants or wild life in the park that you would like to have answered? Or perhaps you have a poem or essay about Coe that you would like to share? All contributions for the newsletter are welcome. Send them to the editors at 127 Glenwood Avenue, Woodside, CA 94062, or bring them to the park headquarters. Hope to hear from you soon!

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The Ponderosa is a periodic publication of the Pine Ridge Association. Its mission is to enhance and enrich the public's experience at Henry W. Coe State Park through education and interpretation.