The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter

November 1990

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

Bullet Hawks

I went for a hike just a few days ago, and, before I even left the asphalt, I saw a small hawk swoop down, try to grab a bird, miss, and then land in the middle of the corral trail. It just stood there, that is, until a golden-crowned sparrow flew close by. The hawk jumped up and tried to catch the sparrow but again missed. It landed on the trail again and then just walked around for about five minutes. I was able to get a good look at it with my binoculars, and I could tell it was a sharp-shinned hawk. About half way through my hike, I heard a commotion to my left, and there was another small hawk on the ground only 30 feet away, but this one had a Stellar's Jay in its talons and its wings spread over it as if to keep anyone from stealing his dinner. As the jay made continuous screeches, other jays in nearby trees gave less frightened but much louder warnings to the forest. Finally the hawk, which was only slightly larger than the jay, released his captive and both flew off—the hawk quietly, the jay with chest-out mockings. This bird was a Cooper's hawk. This is the time of year when we see a lot of these guys.

They have been called blue darters, chicken hawks, swift hawks, strikers, and bullet hawks (to mention only a few names). These steely-gray birds do shoot through the air like bullets, but they are also called "bird hawks," not just because they are birds (sure, tuna are fish) but because they eat almost exclusively birds. They are the accipiters: the sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks. These two and their higher-mountain relative, the northern goshawk, are North America's representatives in the genus *Accipiter,* which means "swift-winged," an appropriate name as you will soon see.

Accipiters in general are medium to small hawks with short, rounded wings and long tails. The adult sharp-shinned and Cooper's are very similar (and unlike many birds, accipiter males and females have the same coloration). They have a steely-gray back and wings, rusty red-barred breast and belly, a tail with black bars, a bright red eye, yellow legs, and a hunger for avian flesh. So how do you tell them apart—it would seem simple: see if their shins are sharp or not. Actually there is an easier way. When I see a bird hawk, the first thing I look at is its tail. If it is squared off or even notched it is a sharp-shinned, if it is rounded it is a Cooper's. This is hard to tell when they are perched but easier when they are in flight. Cooper's hawks are larger than sharp-shinned hawks, but this is not always helpful in identification because in accipiters females are larger than the males; thus a male Cooper's can be about the size of a female sharp-shinned.

Normally we shouldn't have to worry about the larger, northern goshawks, as the books say that they are not found in the Coast Range. However you might want to check the picture in your bird book because in October 1927 one was shot on a neighboring ranch, and one was also seen by a reliable birder over Mahoney Meadows on May 4, 1957. As is the case, we would expect these sightings to happen only about every 30 years (I think I saw one in 1987). The main reason for the scant sightings, I suspect, is the lack of geese—the "gos" part of their name refers to one of their favorite foods—the goose. As with their relatives, goshawks do eat birds but actually prefer small- to medium-sized mammals. Sharp-shins eat mostly small birds and Cooper's a little larger birds, even attacking birds larger than themselves. They will also both take small mammals, especially tree squirrels and occasionally even frogs, lizards, bats, and insects—was that bird on the corral trail looking for bugs?

Cooper's hawks nest and stay in our area all year while sharp-shinned hawks are not believed to nest here. Both move through the park while migrating, and it is during this time—fall and spring—that we see a large number of them. Sometimes they will be seen soaring in short circles, and if you look away for a second they most likely will be gone, having slipped into the forest, their favorite haunt. They are incredible fliers. While walking down the trail below Manzanita Point, I watched one of these "swift-winged" hawks fly at what seemed like full speed down the trail with its walls and canopy of manzanitas. It decided to leave the trail and, as it dodged through the manzanitas, it first pulled in its left wing and then its right wing so that it could fit through the narrow openings. Also, while on my way to town recently, I watched a sharp-shinned flying speedily down the road, and as I got close, it made a sharp right-hand turn (or is that right-wing turn) and slipped between two strands of barbed wire that were also framed by a 2-foot oak on one side and some tree branches a foot to the other side.

Usually these birds don't seem to be bothered by the presence of humans. They must not feel threatened as they know they can quickly disappear into the dark forest. I did, however, have an encounter with a sharp-shinned who I think was unhappy with me for some reason. It had landed in a tree just 25 feet away after missing a bird by the water trough. I enjoyed watching it at such a close range. After a few minutes it turned towards me (I know it knew I was there) and dove straight towards my head, and only a few feet away it swooped up, flying only a foot or so above me. I understood, I have had bad days too. I'm just glad they are not also called head-hunter hawks.

The Miumne
by Teddy Goodrich

Have you ever found yourself in some special place within the park and had the feeling come over you that you are the first person to be there? Such thoughts bring a wonderful sense of awe and wonderment, but they are only a fantasy, for the park has had human inhabitants and visitors for hundreds of years.

A particularly fascinating group who occupied the park were the Miumne Yokuts. The Miumne claimed the area between the crest of the Diablo Range (which we can identify as County Line Road) and the ridge line of which Mustang Peak is part. They built their villages along the drainage of Red, Orestimba, and Robinson Creeks.

Abundant food sources within the area supplied them with all they needed. Fish, aquatic birds, and small mammals provided part of their diet, but the mainstay of their food supply was acorns. The number and size of the permanent milling stations in and along the creeks verify the acorn's importance.

Their dwellings were round or oval. A framework of light poles was covered by woven tule mats, though a quicker, temporary shelter might be built simply of brush piled over a framework. A typical permanent dwelling was between twelve and fifteen feet in diameter and had a mud-plastered floor that was sunk about two feet below ground level. Sweathouses or ceremonial chambers were much larger. Sometimes the homes were placed randomly about the village; other times they were built in semi-linear "arched" patterns.

Metates and manos, mortars and pestles, or permanent milling stations were used for grinding acorns and seeds. Prior to grinding, acorn shells were cracked and removed with the aid of an acorn anvil, an artifact frequently found within the park. Almost always a small piece of red sandstone, an anvil has a small central depression in which the acorn was placed, then cracked with the aid of a hammerstone.

Arrowpoints, scrapers, and knives were most usually manufactured from chert that was obtained from quarries within the park.

The Miumne also valued items they obtained through trade: olivella, clam, and abalone shells from natives living to the west, obsidian from peoples living to the east. Other materials obtained through trade were salt, asphaltum, paint pigment, and certain basketry materials.

Each group of four or five villages had a chief who resided in the largest village. His, or sometimes her, position was hereditary.

Important Miumne ceremonies included the annual mourning ceremony, the rattlesnake ceremony, the rain-making ceremony, and the boys' initiation rite. This last ceremony centered around the use of a drug obtained from the roots of the Jimson weed. Jimson weed both stupefies and induces visions. Fasting and instruction by an elder of the village accompanied the drugged state, which was induced by drinking an extract of the root. The ceremony may have lasted six days, as six is a number with ritualistic meaning to the Yokuts.

There is probably no other group about whom so little is known as the Northern Valley Yokuts, of whom the Miumne were part. By the early 1800s, the park may have been almost vacant of inhabitants. They had either been brought into the missions to the west or had fled into the San Joaquin Valley.

At this time, the mission fathers began to look further afield, both for suitable locations for new missions and for more converts. Expeditions were sent into the interior for these purposes. It is because of these expeditions that Orestimba Creek received its name. About 1808, a group of Indians who lived about a mile above the upper end of the narrows was approached by the Spanish who attempted to take them into Mission San Juan Bautista. The advantages of living within the mission were explained to them, but the Indians resisted. The Spanish expedition, being few in number, decided the prudent thing to do was to return later with a stronger force. Another meeting was agreed to by the Indians, who pointed to the ground and said "Oh-rays-steem-bah," meaning "We meet here again." When the Spanish returned the following year, the Indians again refused to be persuaded to leave. The Spaniards resorted to force, and, according to Latta (1977), so many Indians were killed in the ensuing battle that the soldiers were sworn to secrecy.

At the same time, escapees from the mission were fleeing in increasing numbers. These refugees introduced the horse, among other things, to the Indians living in the interior. Horses were first utilized for food and eventually replaced the acorn as the staple of the Indian diet. Gradually, they began using horses for transportation as well, and their desire to obtain more of them led the Indians to cross over into the coastal areas, raiding ranchos and missions.

The diary of José Dolores Pico states that on the twenty-third day of their expedition in an area near Pacheco Pass, they caught three old Indian men and eight old women. (Too feeble to flee!) They "came upon 238 recently killed animals, a great deal of meat quartered and dried, some 16 live animals, mares and riding horses, and some shot with arrows and others badly treated. Most of these horses belong to the Mission San Juan" (Cook, 1955, p. 270). On June 2, 1819, a large number of horses was stolen from nearby ranchos and from Mission San Juan Bautista. There is a belief that some of these Indians may have sought refuge within the more remote areas of the park, but no evidence has been found to support a historic occupation of the park by native peoples.

California was under Mexican rule after 1822, and military expeditions into the interior changed in focus. While Spaniards had sought primarily to explore, convert, and recapture runaways, the Mexicans were determined to punish raiding Indian bands and take prisoners who would become virtual slaves. Most of these raiding bands were no longer of one tribe but were a mixture of mission runaways, Yokuts, Sierra Miwok, and others. They were not without their own resources, and they effectively resisted a Mexican takeover.

Unfortunately, in 1833 an epidemic of malaria swept through the San Joaquin Valley. It did not stop the raiding, as most of these Indians came from further east. It did virtually wipe out all of the remaining Yokuts in the northwestern part of the valley and, we may assume, any left living in the park. A sick Indian, if he could accomplish it, went home to die where he had been born, often wiping out his native village. An observer reported that "from the head of the Sacramento to the great bend and slough of the San Joaquin, we did not see more than six or eight Indians; while large numbers of their skulls and dead bodies were to be seen under almost every shade tree near water, where the uninhabited and deserted villages had been converted into graveyards" (Cook, 1955, p. 54).

In the park, we find tantalizing remnants of their passing: a green chert core discarded by an aboriginal trial, a hammerstone with a place carefully shaped for the owner's thumb, a fragment of clam shell, a row of eroding house-pits. We can pause and wonder about what life was like for them here. And we can be reminded that other eyes have delighted in the rippling grass on spring green hills, other ears have listened to the gentle sighing of the wind in the pines, other feet have passed where we now walk.

Would you like to learn more about the Indians who inhabited this area of California? Here are some references that might interest you.

Beck, W.A. & Y.D. Hasse. *Historical atlas of California.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974.

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Kroeber, A.L. *Handbook of the Indians of California.* New York: Dover Publications, 1976.

Latta, F. *Handbook of Yokuts Indians.* Santa Cruz: Bear Press, 1977.

Powers, S. *Tribes of California.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

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Ranger Rick's Polecat and Rob's Stinkin' Lickin' Friend

by Barry Breckling

Ranger Rick Morales from Fremont Peak State Park told me his favorite skunk story. He was at the shop at Fremont Peak one night, and, upon leaving, he ran up to his house. As he approached, he noticed his cat eating the cat food on the porch. It was just as he hit the top stair of the porch that he remembered he didn't have a black and white cat—too late. It got him across the legs and, even with repeated washings, those pants have never been the same.

Another story, which I believe came from park friend and lion study helper Rob Klinger, goes something like this. While camping at Manzanita Point one night, he awoke to the feeling of something licking his face. In the moonlight he could tell it was a skunk. Locked in his sleeping bag, the only thing he could do was to just take it.

Any more skunk stories out there?

Dennis Pinion: Reporter of the Year

The Editors of *The Ponderosa* have awarded Dennis Pinion the honor of Reporter of the Year. His writing has been nothing short of prodigious, covering a great variety of topics. Do you remember the following articles that he wrote?

Ponderosa Pines and the Drought
Ponderosa Pines and the Hand of Man
The Visitors' Voice
Oaks Simplified?
Fall
Now There Is No Doubt, We Are in a Drought

All of Dennis's submissions were unsolicited, which means that he recognized a topic as being of general interest, researched and organized the material, and wrote the article—all without any prompting or cajoling. This is the kind of self-motivated behavior that has made the past year of being editors so much easier and rewarding than we had expected. Almost all of the articles in *The Ponderosa* were inspired by the interests of the authors and were handed to us as unexpected gifts. Through your efforts, the newsletter has become substantial in size and eclectic in scope. Often we had to delay publishing articles because we were receiving more material than we could fit into the next issue. Our heart-felt thanks to all of the following reporters who tied for second place: Frank Bath, Harry Batlin, Winslow Briggs, Lee Dittmann, Margaret Enns, Teddy Goodrich, Christi Holmes, Steven Jung, Bonnie Larsen, Judy Mason, Mike Monroe, Duane O'Sullivan, Barbara Radd, Kay Schmidt-Robinson, Lee Sims, Marlene Testaguzza, Jane Tracey, and Roberta Wright.

PRA Board Notes

by Barbara Bessey

The PRA Board of Directors met on Thursday, October 25, at the home of Winslow Briggs.

Bill Frazer provided additional information about the League of California State Park Associations. The Board approved the proposal to join the League and to participate in its activities.

Harry Batlin presented and discussed the architectural plans for renovating the lower level of the Visitor Center. The plans will be available for all PRA members to review at the park headquarters. Comments on the plans should

be submitted to the Board. The Board will vote on the plans at the December meeting. If the plans are approved, a combination of volunteer help from Association members as well as grant writing to raise the necessary funds will be required to complete the project.

After discussions covering several meetings, the Board approved multiple levels of membership in the Pine Ridge Association—each with its own benefits and privileges. (These are described more detail in the next article.) Margaret Enns was selected to chair the committee to administer the membership donor program.

Barry Breckling showed samples of new water bottles depicting Coe Park that can be produced by Specialized, Inc. The Board approved the purchase of the water bottles, which will be sold in the Visitor Center.

Discussions on several topics were begun in this meeting and will be followed up in future meetings. These included a proposal by Winslow Briggs to have the Coe Park carriages included in the Morgan Hill fourth of July parade and a proposal by Celia McCormack to select a uniform or insignia that could be worn by trail crew leaders to identify them as state park volunteers when working on projects in the park.

The next meeting of the Board will be on Thursday, December 13, at a location in Morgan Hill. All PRA members are invited to attend. Please call the Coe Park Headquarters or the Recording Secretary (415/851-7813) for additional information about the meeting.

New Membership Levels Established

The last time the Board revised the membership levels within the Pine Ridge Association was in 1985. This past year, the Board considered a number of proposals for revisions to these membership levels. Not only have operating costs increased since 1985, which suggested that an increase in the basic membership dues was needed, but the feeling was expressed that donors who give so generously above the minimum dues should be entitled to additional benefits and privileges. The additional revenues that are raised will enable the Association to carry out a number of activities, such as upgrading the Coe Park computer, carrying out the renovations in the lower level of the Visitor Center, and making more funds available for interpretative projects. Therefore, at the October meeting of the Board, a new series of membership levels and associated benefits was established. Margaret Enns, with assistance from Barbara Bessey, will administer the new membership program. The new membership levels will become effective as of January 1991.

Highlights of Single Membership Levels:

The basic membership dues will be increased from $5 to $10 as of January 1, 1991. Basic membership includes one vote in the Pine Ridge Association elections of board members, a subscription to *The Ponderosa*, a 10% discount on purchases at the Visitor Center, and advance notice of special events and ticket availability. Individuals who donate amounts from $50 to $99 will become *Sponsors* and will receive, in addition to the benefits for the basic membership, a choice of a gift item (this year's offerings will be either a Coe Park T-shirt or an autographed copy of the new edition of Winslow Briggs's trail guide), and an invitation to attend one of the training sessions normally reserved for Coe Park volunteers (such as a program on wildflowers, tracking, or birds). Individuals who donate amounts from $100 to $299 will become *Benefactors* and will receive, in addition to all of the above benefits and privileges, one free ticket to all special events (such as Mother's Day breakfast and the Fall Barbecue) and an invitation to join a special interpretative activity in the back country. Individuals who donate amounts of $300 or more will become *Patrons* and will receive all of the above benefits for one year plus basic membership indefinitely.

For those members who currently have a *Life* membership in the Pine Ridge Association, their membership will be converted to *Patron* status. This means that they are entitled to receive the gift items and participate in the special events mentioned above for one year and to receive the benefits of basic membership indefinitely.

Highlights of Family Membership Levels:

The basic membership dues will be increased from $8 to $20 as of January 1991. Basic membership includes *two* votes in the Pine Ridge Association elections of board members, a subscription to *The Ponderosa*, a 10% discount on purchases at the Visitor Center, and advance notice of special events and ticket availability. Families who donate amounts from $100 to $199 will become *Sponsors* and receive, in addition to the benefits for the basic membership, a choice of two gift items (this year's offerings will be either a Coe Park T-shirt or an autographed copy of the new edition of Winslow Briggs's trail guide), and an invitation for family members to attend one of the training sessions normally reserved for Coe Park volunteers (such as a program on wildflowers, tracking, or birds). Families who donate amounts from $200 to $599 will become *Benefactors* and receive, in addition to all of the above benefits and privileges, *two* free tickets to all special events (such

as Mother's Day breakfast and the Fall Barbecue) and an invitation for family members to join a special interpretative activity in the back country. Families who donate amounts of $600 or more will become *Patrons* and will receive all of the above benefits for one year plus basic membership indefinitely.

Time to Renew

Your dues in the Pine Ridge Association will be due at on January 1, 1991. All new members who joined the PRA after October 1 of this year, however, are credited with membership throughout 1991 and thus do not have to remit any funds at this time.

Any individual or family who renews now—before the end of the year—can renew at the current 1990 membership levels (that is, $5 for individual members and $8 for families). What a deal! If you have already joined the PRA or sent in your renewal dues and if you would like to upgrade your membership to a Sponsor, Benefactor, or Patron, you can simply submit the balance for your selected membership category.

All members will soon receive a letter from Margaret Enns, PRA Membership Chair, in which all of the new membership categories are described. Renew today! Don't forget—if you want to renew at the 1990 membership levels, be sure to send in your dues by December 31, 1990.

Please send your dues to Coe Park Headquarters; please do not submit them with your ballot.

Help Give the Coe Rooms a Facelift

On Saturday and Sunday, December 1 and 2, Susan Heath will be refurbishing the two rooms at the Visitor Center containing furniture and other household items donated by the Coe Family. Susan is Historical Museum Curator at the District Headquarters in San Juan Bautista. She would like the assistance of up to five Park Volunteers on each of the two days. If you are interested, please call the park to sign up.

1989 Coe Visitor Registry

by Barbara Radd and Dennis Pinion

Each year people from around the word visit Henry Coe State Park. Of course not all visitors sign the vistor registry, but the following locations were represented during 1989.

Within California:
Albany, Anaheim, Antioch, Aptos, Atwater, Belmont, Belmont, Ben Lomond, Berkeley, Brisbane, Campbell, Capitola, Carlsbad, Carmel, Castro Valley, Clearlake, Concord, Cupertino, Davis, El Cerrito, Essex, Fortuna, Foster City, Fremont, Fresno, Gilroy, Grover City, Hayward, Hemet, Hollister, Imperial Beach, Irvine, Isla Vista, Kenwood, La Selva Beach, Lafayette, Livermore, Los Altos, Los Angeles, Los Banos, Los Gatos, Madera, Martinez, Menlo Park, Merced, Mill Valley, Millbrae, Milpitas, Modesto, Monte Sereno, Monterey, Morgan Hill, Mount Hermon, Mountain View, Napa, Newark, North Hollywood, Novato, Oakland, Oroville, Pacific Grove, Palo Alto, Pasadena, Piedmont, Porterville, Redondo Beach, Redwood City, Ripon, Roseville, Ross, Sacramento, Salinas, San Bruno, San Clemente, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, San Juan Bautista, San Leandro, San Luis Obispo, San Martin, San Ramon, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Santa Monica, Santa Rosa, Santa Ysabel, Saratoga, Saugus, Stockton, Sunnyvale, Turlock, Union City, Valley View, Ventura, Walnut Creek, Watsonville, Whittier, Yosemite.

Other States:
Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

Other Countries:
Australia, Canada, England, Germany, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Romania, Sweden.

Did you sign in 89?

Board Election Procedures

The election for members of the Pine Ridge Association's Board of Directors is held annually in the December issue of *The Ponderosa*. There are two or three vacant seats that expire each year, and the term of office is three years. This year, two candidates are running for the two vacant seats.

Only members of the Pine Ridge Association are eligible to vote in the annual election. An official ballot and accompanying envelope are provided as inserts to this newsletter for all Association members. It is important that you mail your ballot in the envelope provided. The envelope has the return address of Coe Park and the address of the District Headquarters, where the ballots are tabulated. The District Office will use this specially

addressed envelope to identify you as an Association member who is eligible to vote. Please do not include your membership renewal dues along with your ballot—the District Office does not process the membership dues.

Even though only two candidates are running for two seats, please show your support by mailing in your completed ballot. You may vote for one or both candidates. *To be counted, ballots must be postmarked on or before 31 December 1990.*

Statements of the two candidates are printed below.

Board Candidate: Dennis Pinion

I have been a volunteer at Henry Coe for the past seven years. Serving as a volunteer has provided an opportunity to serve the community while expanding my knowledge of nature. In addition to serving in the Visitor Center, I have participated in several of the fund rasing activities (barbecues, Mothers Day breakfasts, and art shows). I received the Golden Bear Award for my effort in convincing the county to repair the bridge over Anderson Reservoir, restoring public access to the park after the earthquake. Recently I have written several articles for *The Ponderosa* and plan to write more in the future. The opportunity to write these articles has further increased my knowledge, appreciation, and empathy for the life that surrounds us.

I would like the opportunity to make additional contributions to the park by serving on the PRA Board of Directors.

Dennis Pinion

Board Candidate: Kevin Gilmartin

I would like to solicit your support to become a new member of the PRA Board of Directors. After several years of backpacking in the park, I joined the volunteer program two years ago. In my first year as a volunteer, I devoted over 200 hours to staffing the visitor's center, patrolling the back country on foot (usually two days at a time), and helping to write, edit, and print a training manual that was distributed at the last annual meeting and is being used with the current class of new volunteers. Because of my service to the park, I was promoted to Senior Volunteer and was selected for the Golden Bear Award. This year I have volunteered an additional 200 hours, including becoming co-editor of *The Ponderosa* and attending most of the Board meetings (although I am not a Board member). I assisted Board members with the development of various membership levels in the PRA, with additional benefits for persons and families at the higher membership levels. My objectives were to increase income for interpretative activities by encouraging contributions above the basic membership dues and at the same time to offer opportunities to members to become involved in some of the organized training and back country activities that have been available only to volunteers in the past. This new system of membership levels will be implemented starting next year. I have also participated in the training of the previous and current classes of new volunteers and have attended most of their training sessions. Finally, with another volunteer I prepared a day-long program on identifying birds in the park, including 160 slides and an audio tape of bird songs. All of these activities demonstrate my deep interest in the activities and well-being of Henry Coe State Park, especially those aspects that affect interpretative programs, training, and the involvement of more families in the surrounding communities. I believe I could serve you even more effectively as a Board member.

Thank you for your support.
Kevin Gilmartin

Seasons Greetings
from the Staff of The Ponderosa

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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.