The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter

April 1991

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

Spring Fever

His eyes squinted as he read the letters on the screen. It had been a long day, but there was a project to complete—he had already put in a full day, but he knew it would be dark before he finished. Finger tips typed fast, but now there were more and and more mistakees. The break to get one more cup of coffee seemed to be more rejuvenating than the coffee itself; but this was important work—it must be done—there would be a price to pay if it was not completed on time, and anyway, he had been in the office late many other Saturdays.

He paused and looked out his window and just as he did, a "sharpie" flew by. "What luck to look up just at that moment," he thought. His thoughts turned to the last time he was at Coe when he had seen three Sharp-shinned hawks and a Cooper's hawk, but that was during their fall migration and this was spring—too much time had passed since his last soul-refreshing escape. "Back to work!" he said out loud to an empty office as his eyes went from a focus on some undiscernible distant object beyond his window to the screen a mere foot away.

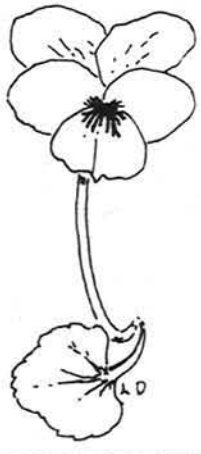
He typed a few more lines of text, then pressed "print" to see what it would look like on paper—had he hit the wrong key? Was he that tired? Filling the screen before him was a monarch butterfly in full color: deep orange and black, shades of yellow and pure white. A blink of the eyes assured him that he was not crazy but certainly very tired. "Concentrate," he whispered through clenched teeth. His mind went blank, but he heard the spin of the hard disk as it vainly (and automatically) saved any new work he might have done in the preceding few minutes. As the disk spun, a warm breeze blew across his face, and lifting his nearly empty coffee cup to his lips, he smelled the sweetness of spring windflowers. "Wake up," he commanded his tired brain. "Exercise, yes exercise, that will bring me back to life," he thought as he jumped up and began to pace in front of the window. Outside he saw the rising black-bottomed billows of approaching spring thunderclouds, and soon he felt the cold refreshing winds and could see the approaching wall of hail; and soon it was upon him, wonderful in its strength, cold upon his arms, and stinging his face—mouth open and tongue out, it tasted just the same as when he was twelve.

He shook his head attempting to bring back consciousness, walked back to his desk, and turned over another page of notes, but apparently it landed on his mouse as a square appeared on the screen. As he moved the mouse to see if it was the cause, a large-eared, skinny-legged mouse scurried across the screen followed closely by a plump but agile bobcat. He hit "Cancel," but to no avail because

in his mind, megabytes turned into mosquito bites, floppies into poppies, and DOS into gloss as his screen widened into a Panavision, glossy picture of Coe. In desperation he hit "Escape!" and he found himself transported into the Miller Field:

"How good it is to feel my feet moving briskly and the need to breath deeply, to breath the fresh and clean air of the hills. That's a field of Johnny-Jump-Ups, little wild violets, and they're all facing the morning sun—it is true that some flowers can follow the sun. I've heard that screeching sound before, a hawk I think. Yes there are two right above me. Oh, wow! They just both came together flip-flopping and interweaving their talons. No question, they are red-tailed hawks with those rusty red tails, and it is the time of year, I guess, for flip-flopping. I haven't walked that far, but my feet are tired. It feels so good to let the clear waters of the East Fork flow over and around them—this rock is a rather hard place to sit for very long, however. The sounds of the creek are so soothing; I only wish the day was longer. It's a little cool in the open but so warm in this sheltered, grassy spot. Just a short nap under this beautiful valley oak with its shiny new leaves and then I'll head back; how pleasant the fragrance of this spring day, how easy it would be to sleep here for a few hours, how . . . ."

There he was seated in front of that terminal again, but now it was Monday morning and the project was not done. He thought, "Was this darn thing called a terminal because I will be here until my dying day, which might be soon?" The boss looked over his shoulder, "An hour and a half—better have that project completed and looking sharp." He started to work and to his surprise fingers typed at magical speed, and things fell wonderfully and easily into place. In an hour and ten minutes he was done, hit the print button, gathered the papers, and with a smile on his face he handed the packet to his boss. "Looks good, darn good, and nice touch," the boss said. He looked at his boss with a questioning stare. "The cover, I'm talking about the cover, the color picture of a butterfly, nice touch."



Did You Know?

Approximately 80% of the precipitation in California occurs North of Sacramento while approximately 80% of the water is used south of Sacramento. DPinion

Letter from a Reader

Dear Mr. Breckling,

I read with interest your article on the California Buckeye (*Ponderosa,* June 1990). Since you want to get to know the Buckeye better, I thought I would pass on some more information to you.

I am a beekeeper, and we have a ranch that borders with the Gill-Mustang part of Coe Park. Let me assure you beyond a doubt, Buckeye can be very poisonous to the honey bee colony.

The individual honey bee is only part of the living unit, the colony, just as our fingers are a part of the living unit, man. Poisoning of the bee colony takes place when Buckeye pollen is brought back into the hive and is fed to the bee larvae. The poisonous pollen causes the larvae to develop abnormally. This is mainly seen as new bees emerging from their pupae with deformed wings or completely wingless.

Also, as the bees use the Buckeye's pollen to mix the queen's feed, royal jelly, it causes her to lose egg production ability. Sometimes she will completely quit laying eggs. As you can see, a hive of wingless bees or no bees at all becomes a dead hive!

In wet years, Buckeye poisoning of bee colonies is not a problem because there are plenty of alternative sources of nectar and pollen. In dry years, it is suicide for a beekeeper to take his colonies into Buckeye country.

I would also like to pass on some anecdotal information about the Buckeye. Over the years I have talked to cowboys who claim that if cattle eat the Buckeye balls they will go crazy. One example passed on to me—a Buckeye-crazy steer will at times come to a crack in the ground and jump it as thought he were jumping a wide gully. Or, on the contrary, he may walk over a creek bank or cliff as thought the ground were as flat as a pancake!

Finally, I would like to pass on a personal feeling about the Buckeye. During deer season the Buckeye has shed its leaves for the year. When a hunter walks through a stand of Buckeye trees, it sounds as though he is walking through corn flakes—thereby serving as an early warning system to all fauna in the area!

Sincerely,
Rollie Azevedo, Gustine, CA

Letters from readers reacting to past articles, expressing opinions, or supplying information are always welcome. Eds.

Did You Know?

The great drought of the 1930's lasted for eight years. DPinion

Acorns: Mush and More!

by Teddy Goodrich

Acorns look a bit smug under their tight-fitting caps, and well they might, because they were the mainstay of the Indian diet in central California. White settlers generally ignored this abundant food source, except as feed for their hogs, who grew sleek and fat on a diet of acorns.

The Indian population had the process of gathering, storing, and preparing acorns down to a well-regulated system. They gathered their acorns in the fall, and entire villages moved from the valleys into the hills during acorn gathering season. In central California, they had seven varieties of oaks to choose from! The acorns of the Tan Oak were preferred above all others, probably because they contain less tannin.

They usually gathered enough acorns to last them for two years, as each species of oak does not bear abundantly every year. If the acorn crop was scanty, or if their store of acorns ran out, they had to resort to other stored food, probably buckeyes. Acorns could also be obtained in an emergency by prying the bark off of the trees where Acorn Woodpeckers had stored them; this released the acorns so the Indians could gather them.

V. K. Chestnut, observing the gathering process in Round Valley, near Ukiah, in the late 1800s, reported that the men beat the acorns off the trees or cut off small branches and threw them to the ground. The women collected them in large burden baskets, which were suspended on their backs by means of a broad band around their foreheads. Both hands could thus be used for gathering. (Chestnut, p. 334)

It is thought that some trees, or groves of trees, were "owned" by specific families or groups of Indians.

The acorns were thoroughly dried in the sun before being stored for the winter in granaries, which varied in size and construction material. The granaries were usually raised above ground-level on poles, a platform, or even in a tree. They were made of thin branches, tule, or bark slabs. One granary was described as being three feet across and eight feet tall. (Latta, p. 400; Heizer & Elsasser, p. 99) Bay leaves were placed in them to ward off insect infestation.

Before being made into meal, the shells of the acorns were removed by cracking them with the assistance of an acorn anvil and a mano. The outer husk was removed by winnowing. Acorns are pounded to make meal, not ground. This pounding could be accomplished in a number of ways. A large bedrock mortar, sometimes called a gossip rock, might be used. Another implement was the bowl-shaped portable mortar, or a portable stone hopper mortar or a fallen tree might be used. In these two latter instances, the bottom would be cut out of an old mush basket, and it would be sealed around the hole in the hopper mortar or to the fallen tree with pine pitch or asphaltum. The basket kept the tiny bits of acorn from scattering. If pounding took place on a bedrock mortar, a brush made from the fibers of the soap root plant was used to brush the meal back into the hole.

The person doing the pounding sat with legs outstretched on either side of the hole and alternately lifted and lowered the pestle, allowing its weight to pound the acorns into meal. Sometimes portable mortars were sunk into the ground to make the process easier.

After an amount of meal had accumulated, it was sifted, as only the finest acorn flour was considered fit to eat. Women who used coarse meal were labeled lazy and inconsiderate cooks. Sifting was accomplished by pressing the meal into a finely woven, circular, flat piece of basketry. The basketry was then tapped with the fingers, and the coarser particles of meal dropped off and were returned to the mortar hole to be reground. Only the meal that clung firmly to the basket was fine enough for consumption.

All acorns contain bitter tannin and require leaching before they can be eaten. A shallow depression was made in the sand by a stream. Sometimes it was lined with leaves. The meal was then placed in the depression, and a fir branch or a grass brush was laid over it to help distribute the water evenly that was then poured repeatedly over it until it was free from bitterness.

To make mush, the meal was taken up and added to water in a water-tight cooking basket. Rocks were heated in a fire, lifted with green wood tongs, plunged into water to remove the ashes, and then dropped into the cooking basket. The mush was then stirred vigorously to prevent the basket from burning and also because the mush began to boil almost immediately. The result was a thick, unseasoned porridge whose taste was very bland. It was eaten either by dipping fingers into the basket or with mussel shells or wooden spoons.

Sometimes the acorn meal was made into bread that was baked overnight in an earth oven. A small fire was built in a pit, and the resulting coals were covered by rocks, which were in turn covered by leaves. The dough—acorn meal and water—was placed on top, covered by more leaves, more rocks, and finally by dirt. Chestnut observed that such bread, several days old and with leafy impressions imbedded into its surface, resembled a "fossil-bearing piece of coal."

This spring, as new acorns form on the oaks in the park, salute the acorn, the forgotten staple food of thousands of California natives!

Want to learn more? Check out one of these.

Chestnut, V.K. *Plants Used by the Indians of Mendocino County, California.* Mendocino: Mendocino County Historical Society, 1974.

Clark, C. *Edible and Useful Plants of California.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Heizer, R., and Elsasser, A. *The Natural World of the California Indians.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

Heizer, R., and Whipple, M.A. *The California Indians.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.

Latta, F. *Handbook of Yokute Indians.* Santa Cruz: Bear State Books, 1977.

Thompson, S., and Thompson, M. *Wild Food Plants of the Sierra.* Berkeley: Wilderness Press, 1972.

1989 Visitor Registry

by Barbara Radd and Dennis Pinion

Approximately 440 individuals signed the Visitor Registry in the Park's Visitor Center during 1989. Their comments follow.

January: Dowdy ranch and back! What a trip! 50 miler! ● Pleasant ● We'll be back ● Mountain Bike heaven ● I'm movin' out! ● Love it! ● Saw coyote above springs trail—False chanterell mushroom (Omphalotus olivasens) (bioluminescent species) on trail. ● Dunno, haven't seen it yet! ● I love the park ● Thanks to Sada and Henry Coe ● Very Beautiful ● Thanks for availing the park to mountain bikes ● Camped and hiked 30 days & if you want to know about it, buy & read my book ● We loved it ● We really liked your museum. Its interesting. ● Awesome drive from Morgan Hill ● Thanks for a great hike

February: Fun in the snow ● Having a ball ● Great time with buddies ● Thank you so much! Very cold! ● Beautiful! Cold! ● Cold, cold ● Very good and great prices!!! ● Great snow ● Spectacular ● Very pretty & clean!! ● Great place ● Snow is nice! ● Snow is awesome ● Out to Manzanita Point to see the perfect Manzanita—then we move South! ● Beautiful ● Absolutely fantastically beautiful ● Glad Barry Breckling is here! ● 1st time with the baby! ● Beautiful ● Great long hike! ● Very impressive! ● We'll be back ● Lovely land ● Nice ● Grate [sic] ● We are glad the park is here, beautiful ● Very green and peaceful ● Beautiful park thank you ● Congenial, pleasant, lovely ● Nice but I am not a hiker. Like the trees better ● Beautiful ● Very interesting park

March: I ♥ this park ● Same & beautiful ● Fascinating ● Handsomely done ● Beautiful ● Beautiful ● Nice & green ● Wonderful! ● Real nice home stead ● Wonderful wild flower hike ● Great and beautiful ● You have great horses ● These hills are steeper than they were 10 years ago ● Beautiful scenery ● Great park—beautiful—good trails ● Beautiful. Great bike rides! ● Beautiful ● Green ● Beautiful! ● The beauty of God's handiwork is awesome ● Outstanding! ● Great! ● Fun! ● Great place—I'll come again ● Great place ● Totally awesome Dude! ● It was neato ● Too cold ● Too cold but nice ● Beautiful & friendly hosts ● Incredible—awesome beauty! ● I love it but I'm sore!!! ● I'm sore!!! ● I'm sore!!! Too much rain, great fishing. Lakes are too far away! ● Had fun, caught fish, too much rain!!! ● Great place! ● Ya'all have a nice place here! ● Good view! ● Enjoyed wild flower walk! ● Nice flower walk. Like the museum staff ● Cold. Beautiful park ● Lovely trails, beautiful flowers ● Beautiful trails, nice small campgrounds. Enjoyed it! ● Turkey

fun—industrial strength exercise ● Great ● Very refreshing ● Long trails but fun ● Fine park ● Wonderful wild flower display!

April: Lovely area ● Great day! ● Lots of fun ● Lovely scenery. Schedule of events not made readily available. Why isn't someone here to answer phones on week days? ● I hurt ● Very refreshing. Where's Julie Andrews? ● Keep it wild! Very beautiful! ● Thank you for preserving this spot ● It was beautiful! ☺ ● Its very beautiful up here ● It was OK but there were no roads or night clubs or restaurants or anything, but other than that I guess it was not too bad. ● It was a beautiful way to spend a beautiful day ● Beautiful place to spend time on our anniversary. ● GREAT PLACE!! ● Very interesting park ● Interesting ● Beautiful ● Lots of wild flowers—beautiful ● Lots of wild flowers & good clean trails! ● Lots of good exercise! ● It was FUN!! ● Loads of fun and excitement!! ● It was very fun! ● We've had a wonderful "family" day (16 of us!) ● Very nice. Will be back. ● Beautiful! Lots of hills! ● Great park! Beautiful flowers & terrific views! ● Awesome, light creates matter. ● Nice horses ● Hot. Nice. Saw a Western rattlesnake, almost stepped on it. ● Beautiful, hot, plenty of fish! ● Our first visit ● First visit. Rangers very cordial. ● Nice place ● Best bunch grasses in state! ● Beautiful day! ● This a beautiful park. Thanks! 20 Boy Scouts, 5 adults. ● Beautiful park. Very helpful Rangers. Thanks! ● Peace & quiet & nice personnel ● Very nice, enjoyed pretty flowers ● I liked the dead animals ● Different. No comment ● Nice, removed, rustic! ● Pretty place. Nice & quiet! ● Beautiful beautiful park—wonderful buildings (keep up the good work) ● Beautiful park. Loved my stay in the wilderness ● Beautiful—would love to come back and hike. ● Nice ● Very nice place to camp! ● Very nice area to hike ● I am happy that the beauty of the land is still maintained. I will come here again. ● Beautiful ● Fantastic wild flowers

May: Beautiful ● Just beautiful, I want to come back soon! ● I love the flowers and rocks ● I hope we will like it!! ☺ Nice museum! ● Beautiful ● Great place to camp—nice & helpful rangers! ● Fun hills & water. ● Great place ● Great trails ● Trails are great but very tough ● Lots of fun!! ● Loved it. It was great ● First visit, my 28th birthday ● My great grand father would be proud! (Peter Coe Verbica) ● What a treat to see this great country again ● I like it ● I saw a snake that would not let me pick it up. I love snakes. ● The trail was great. Lots of flowers and enjoyable animal life. ● Beautiful country! ● A beautiful park named **cow** ● I love it here ● Great! ● Wow ☺ ● Wonderful!! ● Lovely ● Perfect weather, lovely flora & fauna—or at least we saw signs of the fauna! Looking forward to backpacking here soon. ● Really fun back packing experience with the Sierra Club! ● Beautiful and peaceful. Thank you. ● Laura's first overnighter—how fun! ● The view is spectacular and the red farm house is unique for a state park. ● Neat house! ☺ Our first visit ● Great views! ● See you next week! ● Nice rangers, very helpful ● Interesting ● Very nice ● 2nd visit. We love it. ● Good as ever ● Wow ● Great! ● Its great!! Love the trails! ● Haven't gone out yet but so far so great & it was great—we'll be back. Trails the best want to come back! ● Fun ● Tripendicular and nifty! ● Beautiful landscaping ● Sprained my ankle ● There may be hope for the wilderness. Keep up the good work! ● Nice assistance. I really liked the trails. ● Beautiful!!! ● Beautiful ● I feel good! ● Que bella vista!! I am high on the beauty & splendor!

June: Nice trail ● ☺ !!! ● I love this place!! ● Really "up in the clouds"... ● Delightfully foggy ● Beautiful ● Biked to Lost Spring—Great! ● A wonderful quiet park ● Totally cool ● Stew ♥ Val ● Just lovely ● Beautiful ● Great! ● Totally different! ● Love it!!! ● Great ● Up is really up!! ● Biking is rad, Tear up the trails ● Excellent! ● My grand mother is in this park for the first time in her life. ● Great ● I'll be back to go hiking ● Nice place to bring the family ● Looks great for hiking ● Totally awesome—Rad even ● Great campsite ● Great place here. Best camp sites around ● Really rad ● Day hike was beautiful ● Great! ● My family and me had a pretty nice day hike. Even with a 4 year old girl. ● Lovely! ● Great! ● Its the best park to bring people together

July: Me and my Dad really like your State Park. ● In memory of Eric David May ♥. ● HOT! ● Great park ● Nice quiet & beautiful surroundings ● Nice ● Beautiful surroundings ● I like all of the things here. Thank you ● Still water at Lost Springs ● Everything is very pretty ● Thank you for the grace of God ● Its neat! ● It was quiet. No one was here ● Its real nice ● Excellent view ● First time here ● Love it

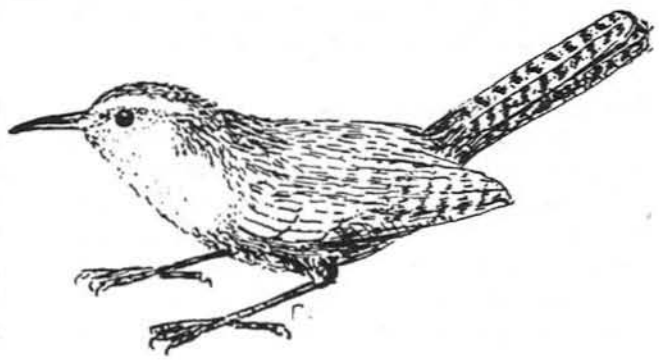
August: Nice place ● Great! ● Fantastic ● Yo! ● Hot! Beautiful ● Breath taking ● HOT, HOT, HOT ● Oh my—dead folks in the potty? Lovely camping! Thanks! ● Very nice ● Bad Hills ● Pretty day! ● Beautiful ● Yea! ● AWESOME ● Beautiful place ● Beautiful

September: Hot—peaceful, serenity ● Its Fantastic ● Yea!! ● Beautiful place ● GREAT PLACE! ● Great place for our horses ● Hot, but fun! ● What a hike! (to Kelly lake) Lots of fish (bass, bluegill, carpi). Bring lots of H_2O ● I survived. I had the horse! ● I'm getting new hiking shoes & coming back. ● Good name for a lake (Kelli Stedman) ● Bone dry, but if you don't stop for water...you deserve it ● Pushing 60 and made it to Frog

Pond ● Quite nifty, plenti O' land, good parking gravel, good trees, good rocks, good plants, good dirt ● Good lack of medflies, nice earlobes on the main ranger, short bobcats, curdy butterflies ● Nice views ● Shiny drinking fountain! ● 1st time up to Manzanita Pt. with Boy Scouts. Nice views. Take water—hike early or at night to avoid heat. Very remote area to visit often but nice to finally get here. ● Wish we could bottle this clean air and take it home ● I liked the big rain storm during our camping trip! ● Very rainy day—love it ● Lots of rain and & mud but it was fun! ● We went to Frog lake. It was cool! Nice man-made lake. ● I love this park. Hope to be here again, soon... ● Last time (probably) before I go to Israel ● Breath taking—beautiful—natural ● Always a pleasure to be here hiking or for the annual Barbecue. Fantastic scenery ● Great mountain biking

October: I enjoy the atmosphere! ● I like the snakes ● Came via bicycle!! ● It was very cold!!! ● Great thick fog everywhere! ● Go mountain biking...again! ● We got to Frog lake & back with a 3 year old! ● NOW this is the last time we are here ☺ Hope to return next year!!! Good-bye! ● Went to Frog lake—so nice. Will be back. ● Came for info & will return! ● This is a great State Park—Awesome! ● This is a nice place to find tarantulas ● The hike was fun and it was hot ● I really liked the air. ● Enjoyed the hike & overnighter to Manzanita Pt. ● First time hear [sic]; we'll be back. ● This is a very nice place. ● Thank you—lovely ● Beautiful but windy!! ● Beautiful views!!! ● Super job!!! ● Beautiful area

November: First time here! Tell you when we get back ● Very well organized. Nice trails! ● Nice but freezing ● Nice hiking and lots of animals ● Beautiful sunset, sunrise & full moon ● Biking all the way! ● Spectacular ● Great drive to a great view! ● Back for Thanks Giving—again. 1989 ● Very nice ● Beautiful ● Very nice! ● Fantic [?] Park! ● Great place ● This is a great place. I love it! Thanks ● This is a great peaceful place! ● I like this park, very mucky! ● Nice park ● Winding roads make for fun driving ● Long time no see! ● beautiful ● Wonderful rein [sic] ● Cold...Happy New Year!



Mother's Day Breakfast

The seventh annual Mother's Day Breakfast, organized by Lee Sims, will be held on Sunday, May 12, at Manzanita Point. Lee, together with his committee, plan to serve a delicious breakfast of freshly picked strawberries, orange juice, sausage and eggs, home-fried potatoes, biscuits, and coffee/tea/hot chocolate. Back again by popular demand, live music will be provided by *Cat and the Fiddle*.

This is an event you won't want to miss! Each of the previous breakfasts sold out soon after the tickets went on sale. Costs to attend are $7.50 for adults and $4.50 for children (six years of age or younger) and senior citizens. Only a limited number of tickets will be sold. Tickets are available at Coe Park headquarters or, to order tickets by mail, send (1) a check made out to the Pine Ridge Association for the correct number of Mother's Day Breakfast tickets and (2) a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Henry Coe State Park, P.O. Box 846, Morgan Hill, CA 95038. If you have questions about the breakfast, please call Lee Sims (home (209/383-7848) or work (209/722-7467)).

All-Day Birding Hike

On Sunday, May 19, the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society will be conducting a field trip in Coe Park. The hike is being led by Mike Feighner of the SCVAS, with assistance by Kevin Gilmartin and Barbara Bessey of the PRA. The plan is to leave from the visitor center at 8 a.m., walk slowly out to Manzanita Point, eat lunch out there, and return in the afternoon. Possible sightings include northern orioles, western tanagers, black-headed grosbeaks, wild turkeys, and lots of other kinds of birds. Anyone who wants to can join the hike—you do not need to be a member of SCVAS or an experienced bird-watcher. You should wear comfortable walking shoes and bring water and something for lunch; also, be prepared for warm weather in the afternoon. If you know in advance that you would like to join the hike, please call Mike Feighner to let him know: 408/354-0138.

Upcoming Coe Park Back Country Treks

Over the past several years, Association members have been able to enjoy organized treks to the back country to witness a beauty of Coe Park that most people have not seen. Organized by Lee Sims and with the permission of the Gavilan District Office, PRA members and their families have had opportunities to explore places such as

Pacheco Creek, Robinson's Creek, Burra Burra Peak, and Mustang Peak, to name a few. This year, several more back country events are being planned.

Put *June 1–2* on your calendar and join PRA members to hike the Pacheco Creek area. You will enter the park through the Bell Station entrance and camp out at the Dowdy Ranch. During the *full moon in either July or August* (the 26th or the 25th, respectively), last year's popular moonlight hike around Burra Burra Peak will be offered.

All interested PRA members and their families are invited to participate in these special events. The only requirement is that you enjoy the out-of-doors and have an interest in getting to know more about Coe Park. If you would like to join us in June or if you have questions about the moonlight hike later in the summer, please call Lee Sims (home (209/383-7848) or work (209/722-7467)).

In the News

From time to time, *The Ponderosa* reprints articles with permission from other publications, because the messages they offer or the feelings they give us are those that we associate with Coe Park. It is very satisfying, therefore, to have an organization request permission to reprint one of the articles written for *The Ponderosa*. We extend congratulations to **Barry Breckling**, whose article on the Black and White Weasel, which he wrote for the September 1990 issue, will soon appear in *Living it Up!*, the newsletter of the Backpack Section of the Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Postcard Photo Contest Revisited

by Bonnie Larsen

Photographers, check this out!

Last year's postcard photo contest, as participants know, resulted in an enjoyable showing and potluck, but no winner and no postcard. Janet Vierra, of Earthshine Postcards, has kindly given us some tips on taking a great postcard photograph. She said that people at Earthshine have spent years trying to get what they consider the perfect shot of an animal or a scenic area, so I suppose it shouldn't come as a surprise that Coe photographers didn't succeed on the first try. So, aspiring photographers, don't give up! Read on and take some new shots, and look over your old photos for possible winners.

Postcards, because they are larger than the usual print and because they are printed on different material, require somewhat different standards than a normal photograph.

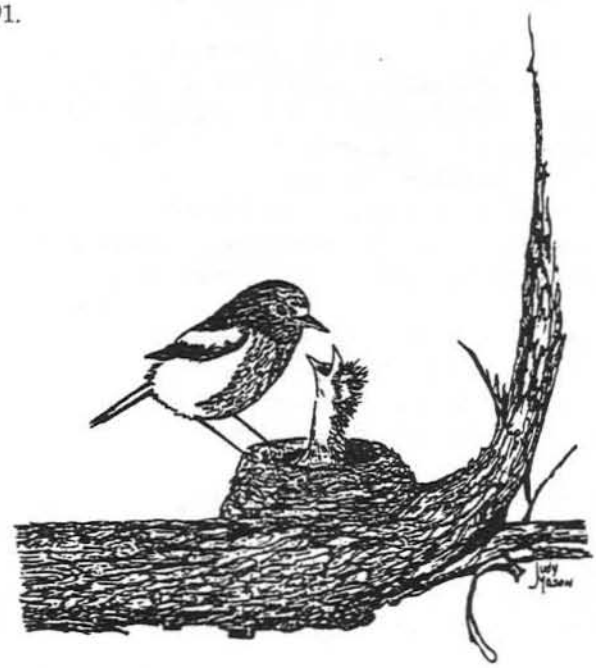
In landscape photography, light is extremely important. Best results are achieved usually in the early morning or late afternoon to avoid a washed out appearance. It is often advantageous to use 35mm slide film (Fuji-chrome or Kodachrome are good examples) plus a polarizer and a warming filter. Try shooting 90° from the sun using a high f-stop. The use of a tripod is highly recommended.

When examining slides, look for sharp, high-contrast views, with a dark blue sky. Artistic composition is very important. Showing more landscape or more sky, depending upon the desired effect, is preferable to having the horizon cutting through the middle of the picture. Look at the slide through a good magnifier to make sure that the picture is very sharp.

If you want to look at some of Earthshine's most recent picture postcards, ask to see those attached to the cabinet in the office at the Coe Park visitor center. The new Mt. Diablo State Park postcard is quite reminiscent of the scenery at Coe.

Don't forget that the winning photographer will receive a framed enlargement of the photograph and a dozen postcards, complements of the Pine Ridge Association.

Entries should be sent to Postcard Photo Contest, Pine Ridge Association, P.O. Box 846, Morgan Hill, CA 95038. You can also turn in your entries at park headquarters. Entries should be postmarked no later than 30 September 1991.



Farewell to the Board
by Bonnie Larsen

Having just finished my three-year term on the Pine Ridge Association Board and my year as chair at the same time, I'm pleased to take advantage of this opportunity to thank fellow board members for their support and hard work during 1990.

A few years back, board chair Doug Jones went to a workshop where he learned how to get the board organized. This was not quick and easy, but the good work was carried forward by Don Holmes, and the same basic plan was followed last year. The way it works is, the board decides what things it wishes to accomplish for the year, and each member becomes responsible for seeing that one or more of the goals get done. This does not mean that the board member personally will do whatever he or she is responsible for. It means that the member will see that it gets done. Often the board member acts as a liaison between the chair of an activity and the board. I felt very lucky during my time as chair to have board members who always seemed to do what they promised, well, and on time. This made my job as chair primarily one of listening to the good news that things were going as scheduled.

A quick retrospective view of board activity proves that we weren't just muddling along as I sometimes thought:

It was extremely pleasant, I shall mention first, to have the annual barbecue and Mother's Day Breakfast come off as scheduled and actually make some money. Margaret Enns kept the board posted on those activities.

A particularly good feeling occurred when the full park map was published due to the ongoing efforts of Winslow Briggs and his helpers. It also was good to have the new edition of Winslow's trails book in the visitor center. Another publishing triumph occurred when the new newsletter format appeared and it finally became profitable and possible to go to bulk mailing. Barbara Bessey and Dave Hildebrand saw to these items.

In 1990 the visitor center addition began to look like a reality for the first time as members had the opportunity to review architectural drawings. Celia McCormack was the board's liaison on that project.

Bill Frazer kept his double-jeopardy job of being Volunteer Committee chair and serving on the board. Bill has kept the board posted on volunteer activities and done a good deal of work making it easier to keep track of volunteer talents and projects. Roberta Wright, also on the Volunteer Committee, supervised volunteer training and also kept tabs on the volunteer manual.

Minutes arrived in my mailbox before each meeting thanks to Barbara Bessey. Treasurer reports kept coming from Jim Mason, who isn't even on the board but willingly continues to serve as treasurer.

Through all of this, the association managed to increase membership by a whopping 20 percent and implement a new membership incentive program to offer additional benefits to those who donate more than the required membership fee.

Sometimes, during my term of office, people would ask me how I liked being a bigwig. It had not occurred to me that I was a bigwig, but hey, it was alright. I will tell you what I liked about it: I liked knowing what was going on. Yep, on the board you certainly have your finger on the pulse of the organization.

Now that I'm off the board, people ask me if I miss it. I will tell you: No, I don't . . . well, maybe just a little bit. But I realize that if I want to know what is going on, I may go to any board meeting, as any member may, anytime, without being on the board.

I think that the membership of the board, the Volunteer Committee, the State Legislature, and other august bodies should change. The organizations must change to meet the changing needs of their members and those they represent—not entirely, on a moment's notice, but naturally as time goes on. If they don't, they atrophy and become ineffective.

Both the PRA board and the Volunteer Committee have made a lot of changes in the last few years. This is part of their evolution. It is not easy for the people who have to decide what changes to make, as they have to be patient and willing to work things out until they get things as close to right as possible. I'm glad I'm not doing it now.

Though this may not be the time to make a pitch for members to think about being on the board or the Volunteer Committee, I will mention, just in passing, that it is good experience to do these things. You may be able to apply what you learn to some other facet of your life—and you will know what is going on.

Board Notes
by Barbara Bessey

The Association's Board of Directors met on 7 March 1991 in Morgan Hill. Dennis Pinion, Barbara Bessey, and Kevin Gilmartin summarized the activities undertaken by the computer committee in its selection of a new computer system for Coe Park headquarters. The existing computer, purchased approximately five years ago, is not large enough or fast enough to support some of the software and graphics packages that PRA members feel would facilitate the production of interpretative materials for use in the park. Assisted by David Hildebrand, Barry Breckling, and Leif Larsen, the committee recommended that the Association purchase an IBM-compatible microcomputer (with a 386 processor and running at 33 Mhz), color monitor, and a Hewlett Packard Series III laserjet printer (with rotatable and scalable fonts) for use in the office at park headquarters. The Board approved the purchase of the system; Dennis, Barbara, and Kevin will purchase the equipment and install it.

Winslow Briggs provided an update on the proposal by Dave Sellers and Fred King to construct and install registers on various peaks in Coe Park. After discussions with members of the Trails Committee, the design of the registers was modified to make them smaller and less obtrusive. The Board approved the purchase of materials for constructing approximately a dozen water-tight registers containing pencils and notebooks that would be installed on the selected peaks by Dave, Fred, and members of the Trails Committee.

The Board also approved the use of a Program Information Line as a way of providing information to the public about upcoming interpretative programs in Coe Park. The public can now call a telephone number in Morgan Hill (complements of Dennis Pinion), twenty-four hours every day, and hear a recorded message about what day-time walks and evening interpretative programs are being offered and when they will take place.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board will take place on Thursday, May 23, at 7:30 pm, at the St. Louise Conference Center in Morgan Hill. All PRA members are invited to attend. Please call the Recording Secretary, Barbara Bessey (415/851-7813) for further information (including directions to the meeting).

Robinson Creek Hike
by Lee Sims

Alas, the weather could not have been better for the February 23 hike through the Robinson drainage. In one way or another more than thirty people participated as hikers, drivers, or good-time-hangers-on.

The hike, before the March rains, up Red Creek, over Robinson Mountain into the Robinson drainage went through the driest country I have ever seen in February in Coe Park. The few shooting stars we saw were diminutive, reflecting a valiant effort in such dry soil—it was amazing that they were blooming at all.

But the good old native California Buckeye was just sprouting the brightest, greenest leaves one could imagine, denying that there was a drought—it was just the normal California weather cycle.

The old Robinson fire road that we descended in now, of course, impassible to automobiles because of washouts and downed trees. But a further sign of its slow but relentless return to nature were small sprouts of Mountain Mahogany in the ex-road bed. This shrub is very common in the eastern half of the park and is obviously an opportunist, even in these dry times.

In the wide flat area of the Robinson full of giant sycamores and tree-like holly-leaf berries, Barry Breckling showed us a Native American site with at least three deep house pits and artifacts abounding. It also had a blooming yellow gooseberry, only the third site for them discovered in the park. From there we went to Pinto Creek to "Barry's Bathtub," a deep, clear pool of water sheltered from the sun. It was not sheltered from several eager hikers who immediately stripped (some more than others) and cooled off. This pool is apparently absent in the fall, though there was water running into it during our visit.

Saturday night we were joined by some hangers-on—one, claiming continuing injury from December's freeze, really proving that the Dowdy ranch is handicapped accessible. Margie Snively came Saturday night to say good-bye, as she is off to Africa with the Peace Corps in April and may not be back for more than two years.

In retrospect, the highlight of the weekend has to have been the rain dance led by Barry Breckling and Hersch Wright. The week of storms beginning several days later is certainly due to their efforts.

Calling All IBMers!

The Pine Ridge Association is planning to submit a proposal to the IBM Fund for Community Development to solicit financial support for upgrading the microcomputer used at the park. Our chances of receiving the funding from IBM may depend in part on the number of IBM employees who belong to the PRA. If you or your spouse is a current or retired IBM employee, would you please call Barbara Bessey or Kevin Gilmartin at 415/851-7813. They have an answering machine, so you can leave a message with the name of the employee. Thanks for your help!

Puzzle

Which states are the farthest north, south, east, and west? (A surprising hint—the four answers involve only two states!)

Cattle Begone

by Kay Schmidt-Robinson
Chief Ranger, Gavilan District

How many times have you seen cattle in Coe Park? Have you seen cow patties or hoof prints on Kaiser-Aetna Road? Have you seen riparian (creekside) areas grazed barren? What about "browse" lines on trees?

Hopefully, you will see less of these things in the future, at least on the east side of the park. During autumn 1990, Gavilan District developed an agreement with a contractor (a.k.a. "cowboy") and the park's neighbors for the removal of stray cattle within the park boundaries.

The contractor was necessary because many of the cattle were so wild as to be uncatchable, or the ownership was doubtful, or the ownership was so distant (some cattle were left from the ranching operations of the early 1970s). The search area was limited to an area that covers about thirty square miles—the Pacheco Creek drainage near the Big Culvert, Mustang Flat, Paradise Flat, Red Creek, and Robinson Canyon.

Some of you may have seen Ralph Lausten, the contractor, during October and November. Large sections of the east side were searched, and any "found" cattle were brought to temporary pens at the Orestimba Corral. A total of seventy-four head were removed. Under pre-arrangement, they were taken to a local stockyard where the Brand Inspector "greeted" and photographed each one. Ownership was determined by brands, earclips, and eartags.

After reimbursement to the Department of Agriculture and the stockyard, the owners and contractor negotiated a fair deal for the cost of the removal. The result was that everyone felt fairly compensated for their services, costs, and property.

The benefit to the state and to the park will be in terms of effective management of the resources for which Henry W. Coe State Park was established. Fewer cattle will mean better oak seedling regeneration. A sincere effort for reestablishment of native grasses can be made. The riparian zones will not be impacted by grazing. The appearance of the park will more nearly approach that of pre-European settlement of California.

But the presence of cattle in the park is likely to be a continuing problem. With the drought, the "lushness" of Coe Park grasslands can look pretty good to neighboring cattle. Cattle fences are not always in good repair. We need you to help be our eyes and ears whenever you are in the park. What you can do is to note with care any stray cattle in the park. Before we can notify the owner, we need good identification of the brand. When notified, the owner has ten days in which to remove the stray cattle from the park. If he or she fails to do so, the state may take further action. Action was taken by the state on one other previous occasion. In August 1988, seven park employees and volunteers gathered ten head of cattle for which the owner had to pay $1,100 to retrieve them.

I feel that we have been successful in eliminating stray cattle from the park and have therefore improved the chances for the park to regain some of the look, feel, and, yes, smell, of the wildness of Coe Park.

Year of the Oak: An Afterward

by Mike Monroe

1990, the year of the oak, is now history. But the seed (acorn) has been well planted, and many Californians have become more aware of the need for oak tree conservation and habitat preservation. At Coe Park, we are fortunate to have 67,000 acres of protected wildlands with the *Quercus* species a major element in many of the plant communities. However, nearly 80 percent of California's oak woodland acreage is held in private ownership. The result has been that, over time, our oak resource is being diminished by agricultural and urban developments and by the poor regeneration of some oak species caused by a variety of factors, including animal grazing and the success of nonnative plants.

It is important that the oak protection issue remain focused, especially in light of California's rapid population growth and accompanying land development. With this purpose in mind, the California Native Plant Society devoted its entire July 1990 edition of *Fremontia* to the subject of oak trees. The following excerpt from "California Native Oaks: Past and Present" written by James Griffin and Pam Muick provides some food for thought:

> The fossil record indicates that oaks have been in California for at least the past ten million years. During this long history, oaks have evolved strong interrelationships with many forms of wildlife. Today, an estimated 5,000 species of insects use oaks, approximately 170 species of birds, 58 species of lizards, snakes, and amphibians, and 105 species of mammals, including most of the state's game animals, are associated with oak habitats. Oaks dominate or co-dominate in twenty-five plant communities and are characteristic members of forty-three others. Approximately ten million acres of California are habitat to the nineteen native oak species.
>
> Throughout California major areas of oak woodland remain; but locating healthy, mature, or young regenerating oak stands, unthreatened by agriculture or urban development, is becoming increasingly difficult. Before we enter the next century, Californians should critically evaluate the role of oaks in modern society and how these ancestral landscapes should be utilized and/or preserved.
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> (*Fremontia,* July 1990, Vol. 18(3), 4–10)

For Sale in the Visitor Center

There are a number of interesting, new books for sale at the Coe Park Visitor Center. *Managing Planet Earth,* published by W.H. Freeman in 1990, captures your attention in the Foreward with the observation: "Only 10,000 years ago we comprised 5 to 10 million individuals scattered in neolithic settlements . . . sometime in 1987 we passed the 5 billion mark . . . . Air, water, climate, and other forms of life have begun to suffer, perhaps irreversibly, from the effects of our economic activity. If such processes run unchecked, it seems highly probable that we will render our planet uninhabitable." The book contains articles published from the popular *Scientific American* magazine that discuss strategies that will help ensure the health and continuing economic development of the earth. Chapters focus on threats to the world's water, the changing climate and atmosphere, as well as strategies for successful agriculture and energy use.

You can purchase this very informative book for $12.95 plus tax (don't forget that PRA members receive a 10% discount on all purchases at the visitor center). Check it out!

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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.