The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

April 1993

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

Watch Them Fly

Sit back and imagine that you are the shape of an F-14 jet fighter but smaller than a frisbee, and you are moving at some incredible speed just a foot or so off the ground. See yourself traveling down a gentle slope of an open meadow on a beautiful spring day. Things ahead appear clear, but in your peripheral vision you see the blur of the grass as you speed by, and occasionally you clip the very top of a blade or two of grass. You are buffeted by the wind, yet you are in total control, using every current to your advantage. As you approach a small rock pile, you gently glide up and over it. You make a last minute yet purposeful swerve to the left to miss a lone tree and then an even quicker jog to the right to avoid hitting a jackrabbit that pops up out of the grass. As you near the forest that forms the boundary of the meadow, you snatch a slow-flying insect and swing up just in time to miss the green wall of trees. And what do you do next? You swallow, of course.

I haven't been out much this spring (but then maybe you surmised that from the exercise above) and have not been able to come up with anything to write about. Well, I could tell you about the new things I've learned about WordPerfect or how to use a Richo 21 fax machine or the proper way to do a refund for three backpackers out of a party of four that are leaving two days early. There was one interesting thing I saw while I was walking up to the office yesterday. It was a funny looking bluebird, which upon closer inspection turned out to be a barn swallow. I got excited and "went off" talking to myself and the bird about how great it was to see him or her (males and females are similar in appearance). A park visitor gave me a strange look (he, too, probably figured that I'd spent too much time in the office, or he more likely thought it was too much time out talking to the trees and bees). I've missed the barn swallows that used to nest in—of all places—the barn. They have not been here for the past two years—I hope they are back to nest.

What a joy it would be to have a sleek, slender, shiny body like the barn swallow's and to be able to fly as they do with unending energy and amazing agility. They have a beautiful metallic blue-black back and deep red-brown around their face and neck, but the easiest way to tell them from other swallows is by their long, forked tail. They are so agile that they can catch a drink off the top of a lake as they dash by or take a quick bath in the same manner.

Inside this issue . . .

The mystery of Lyme disease partially solved

Major effort to improve the springs in the park

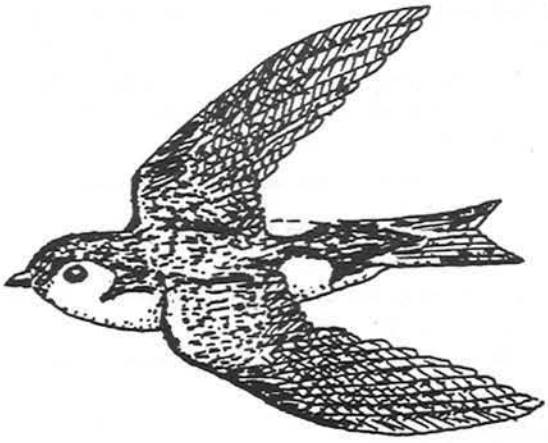
Might the park be turned into a reservoir?

Calendar of upcoming events

. . . and more!

Swallows are built to fly and spend more time in the air during the day than any other songbird. They have long slender falcon-like wings attached to a fuselage body and can speed along at over 40 mph. Often in nature, speed and endurance do not go together, but this is not the case with swallows. In addition to their great speed, they also migrate farther than any other land bird—some barn swallows migrate from Argentina to Alaska and the Yukon—as much as 7,000 miles. Barn swallows are found throughout all of North America, spending the summer from Canada to Mexico and wintering in South America. They are also found in the summer throughout Europe and Asia. In places where two or more swallow species are feeding, you can see the different niches they occupy. At Coe headquarters, for example, the barn swallow will be feeding near the ground, while the more common violet-green swallow will be feeding much higher.

People have long loved swallows, maybe because they are outstanding insect eaters or possibly for their great beauty or admiration of their agile flight. It might even be because they faithfully return every spring to the same place on close to the same day. But I think it is because swallows seem to like people. We like those who like us. As colonists spread across the United States, one species, the cliff swallow, followed them into new territories they both had not seen before. As people opened up and tilled the land, it gave the swallows open ground in which to fly and more insects to eat. People also built barns and bridges and other buildings on which these cliff dwellers could build their nests. There is so much more to tell about the barn swallow and its relatives, but I think I'll go outside and just watch them fly for a while.



Violet-green Swallow

Yosemite Is a Wilderness, Isn't It?

The following letter to the editor was printed in the winter 1992 issue of Yosemite, the newsletter published by the volunteer association for Yosemite National Park. Many of the ideas and sentiments could apply to Coe State Park. The letter is reprinted here with permission from the author and from the editor of Yosemite.

We Deny Yosemite Its Identity

We need to be truthful. We don't have time to be anything else.

We visit Yosemite. And we are spoiled. Just think about it. We expect electricity, wood stoves, septic systems, parking places, garbage dumps, stores, even a chef—and if that's not enough, we expect some four-legged animal to take us where there's no road—yet.

We even have business conferences in the park, operas, education conferences, union meetings, *ad infinitum.*

The fact is, this is either a wilderness or it is not. We cannot compromise the definition of wilderness—an uncultivated region—why should we compromise this place itself? We are impacting each time we visit.

I have recently returned from Alaska, from Denali National Park, where only one road leads to the entrance, to a small visitors' center, where there is one parking lot, and one campground, and a person must sign up for a bus, and it shuttles people into the park—80 miles—and out again. We see; we exclaim at its land and its animals—the griz, the wolf, the eagle, the fox, the caribou; we stand in awe of such beauty, freely given, and then we leave. We must leave. To do anything else is to make it intolerable for the animals there. To do anything else is to stomp the tundra into dust. To do anything else is to deny it its very identity as a wilderness.

This awe is all too fleeting, if it cannot be sustained in the very policies of running the park.

Yet we deny Yosemite—that we claim we love so much—its very identity. For many of us, it's a backdrop, it's a wonderful place to climb, a great place to have family get-togethers in little tent houses, a terrific place to get married in—which propagates the need of the human, but does nothing for Yosemite. Wilderness is what gave this park its power. It is time to recognize that Yosemite is not a cute city park we hustle around in. We are part of the impact, and the ultimate destruction, and we do not have that right.

No matter how the population grows, we do not have that right.

To be truthful, California is dying. If we cannot look inside ourselves and know that this could be the strongest statement for the preservation of life as it should naturally exist—a condition abundant in this state only 100 years ago, if we cannot create what would be the final bastion in this state against unfettered consumerism and greed, if we cannot preserve all that is still alive and well, wild and wonderful, if we cannot create a point of reference for our ideals, and through our example, speak to the world of the possibilities of human endeavor for the benefit of generations of animals and humans alike, then we are not the Yosemite Association. And we are as much a part of its death as any short-sighted adversary of individual rights.

But we *are* the Association—we *have* this power—not one Members' Meeting weekend in September, but all the days of the year, in all ways checking how this park is perceived. But where are the protesters, the speakers, the lobbyists, the movers, the educators? We must speak and act now, not tomorrow, with truth in our hearts, and clarity in our minds. This is the wilderness we must defend—voraciously—or we do not have the right to say years from now, "Yes! I sacrificed my fleeting enjoyment for the true meaning of the Preserved Land." We must go home, and rethink what this park truly is.

If we do all these things, Yosemite will have given us the opportunity to express our own true glory, and we will have given back to the wilderness its due.

J. J. Kaiser **Bakersfield**

Wilderness Areas: Inspiration from Tasmania

by Winslow Briggs

The following statement appears along with some very nice natural history exhibits in the visitor center of Cradle Mountain National Park, in the island state of Tasmania, Australia. This succinct description seems to me to apply to much of Coe Park—both inside and outside of the formally designated wilderness areas.

Wilderness areas are expanses of undisturbed land that are large enough to enable natural processes to continue. They provide for:

A diversity of habitats

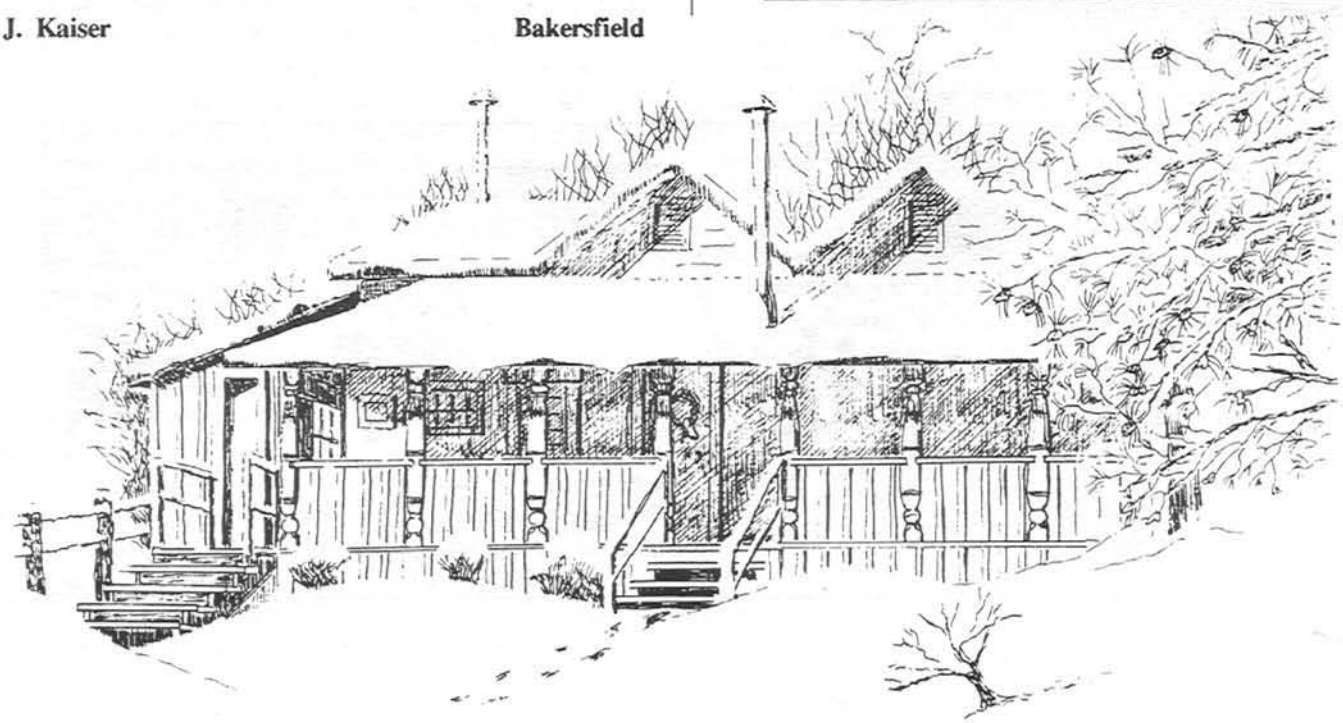
Recreation activities

A healthy gene pool for plants and animals

Scientific research—both now and in the future

Educational pursuits

Inspiration and exploration



Source of Lyme Disease Found in California

by Kevin Gilmartin

California has the fourth-highest incidence of Lyme disease according to the Centers for Disease Control, with only New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey reporting more cases. But California is a large state with one-tenth of the U.S. population, so counts of almost anything tend to be high in California. The **rates** of contracting Lyme disease (that is, correcting for population size) are much higher in the northeastern states. California has been a puzzle, however—the infection rate in ticks appears to be too low to sustain itself. That puzzle has now been solved—the life cycle of Lyme disease is different in the west than in the northeast.

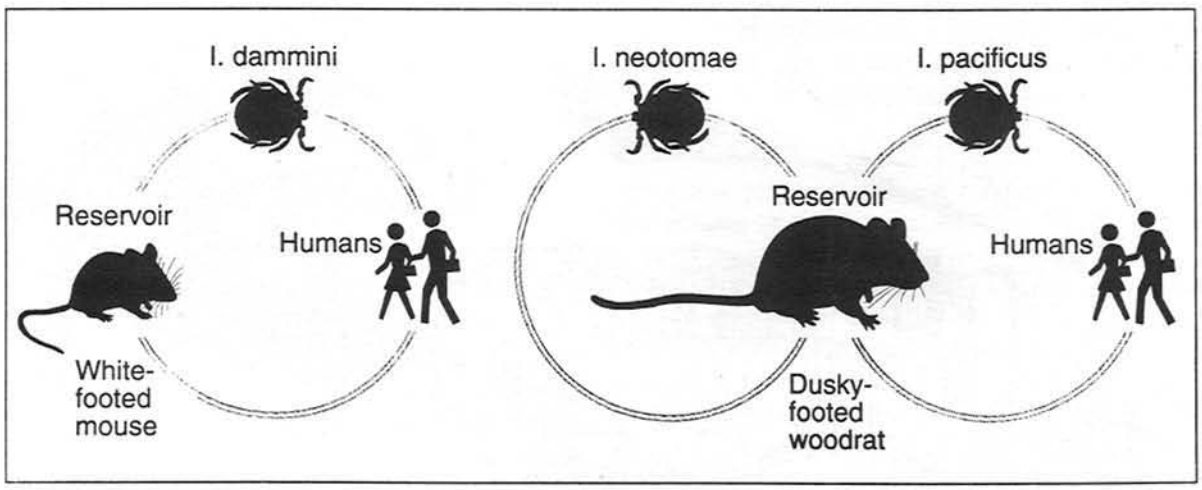
But first to start at the beginning: Lyme disease is caused by a spirochete, *Borrelia burgdorferi.* In the northeast, the spirochete thrives in white-footed mice and is picked up by the deer tick *Ixodes dammini* when young tick nymphs feed on the blood of the mice. Typically 25 percent to 50 percent of the nymphs become infected. The deer ticks then spread the infection to other animals, including humans. In humans the disease causes a rash and flu-like symptoms and, if untreated, can progress to severe arthritis-like symptoms.

In California, a different tick, the western black-legged tick *Ixodes pacificus,* gives the disease to several hundred people each year. One reason Lyme disease is much less common in California than in the northeast is that only 1 percent to 5 percent of the western black-legged ticks are infected. Biologists have thought for some time that this infection rate is too low to sustain itself in an animal reservoir (like the white-footed mice in the northeast).

So the puzzles were (1) Where did the black-legged ticks pick up the disease? and (2) How is that reservoir of infection maintained when so few ticks are infected?

In the June 5, 1992, issue of *Science,* biologists Richard Brown and Robert Lane from the University of California, Berkeley, filled in a big piece of the puzzle. They reported that dusky-footed woodrats—also known as packrats because they collect things to hoard in their nests—are a Lyme disease reservoir. In addition, they found a pattern of disease transmission different from the one in the northeast—a two-cycle pattern that requires not just one tick but **two ticks.** The second tick *Ixodes neotomae* is infected about 15 percent of the time—enough to maintain the endemic disease—but it doesn't ever bite humans. Both ticks are required for humans to become infected: *Ixodes neotomae* to keep the woodrats infected and the black-legged tick to pick up the disease from the rats occasionally and to pass it on to humans.

These findings may not be the last word on the subject. Additional animal reservoirs of Lyme disease may be found in California in the future, possibly with some other species of tick infecting them. Nevertheless, Brown and Lane's work has given researchers a start on understanding and controlling Lyme disease in the west.



Coe Park Water Spring Maintenance

by Michael Freeman, Arrangements Chair of the Central Coast Chapter of the Mule Deer Foundation

Members of the Central Coast Chapter and the Salinas Valley Chapter of the Mule Deer Foundation (MDF) got an opportunity to witness first hand what the six-plus years of drought and current state economic cutbacks have created at Henry W. Coe State Park. Volunteers from Morgan Hill have asked for the foundation's help to rectify burgeoning water problems. To support the current blacktail deer populations, a change in the quality and quantity of water in the park needs to be made. Jointly the Central Coast Chapter, the Salinas Valley Chapter, and the volunteers from Morgan Hill are working on this project.

On October 3, 1992, Central Coast Chapter committee members Frank Magincalda, Terry Ludlow, Michael Freeman, and MDF Director Alex Ramoz toured Henry W. Coe Park. We were invited to visit the park by volunteer workers Ruby Domino and Dennis Rubida. Both are members of the Water Spring Maintenance Committee of Coe Park and were our guides for the day.

Coe Park has 100+ springs and four larger lakes, not including small ponds, for its water sources. Several of the springs have large 500-gallon water tanks that feed smaller watering troughs, while the remainder of the springs have cement boxes that feed watering troughs. Most of the large tanks we visited were in need of minor repairs, like patching small holes or clearing clogged lines. However, the cement box springs we saw need to be redug and cleared of brush and weeds to get the water flowing again. More tanks need to be installed to maintain water flow throughout the year. Most of the water troughs need to be replaced, and some springs need two troughs. Mr. Coit hand-built the troughs now being used, and it has been many years since they should have been replaced. Troughs that had water were leaking like sieves, water was running out of the seams or through holes too big to be fixed. Wooden stands that are holding the troughs have rotted to the point of allowing the troughs to settle on the ground and list to one side or the other.

Even though this was the beginning of fall, each of us could see that many of the springs were large enough to be perennial, while others would be seasonal. Our thoughts were confirmed by both Ruby and Dennis. Our guides knew the Coit family, the Coe family, and the owners of the Gil-Mustang Ranch starting in the early 1970s. At each spring site, either Ruby or Dennis would explain the history behind the spring, who found it, who worked it, where it started, and when it stopped flowing. There is as much history and nostalgia behind the springs as is behind the park. I wish I had more time to tell the stories.

During our short stay, each of us experienced first hand the detrimental effect the lack of work on the springs has had on plants and deer. At each spring site, we saw many trails leading to the spring. Most of the springs were dry, even the large ones.[1] Vegetation has grown up, around, over, and through most of the springs. This makes accessibility difficult at best for the deer. Plants were soaking up the water before it could accumulate on the surface of the ground.

During July, Ruby, Dennis, and friends worked on a spring located next to Kaiser-Etna road. Dennis repaired the box, and the others labored on the spring. No blacktail deer had used the spring before that time because the spring had dried up. Within a couple of weeks, new deer trails appeared where there were none before, while current deer trails once again became used. This was apparent to our MDF tour group. Good work Ruby, Dennis, and friends!

Now comes your turn. The Spring Maintenance Committee of Coe Park is made up of just a few concerned volunteers. They realize a task of this size needs more resources than they can muster. The Coe Park committee has asked the Mule Deer Foundation to help in any way it can. The Central Coast Chapter and the Salinas Valley Chapter are taking an active role in helping to promote this cause to enhance the habitat for the blacktail deer and other wildlife that consider Coe Park their home. To help offset the expenses, we are asking for as many large water tanks and water troughs as we can acquire. This spring we will be organizing a work weekend in Coe Park to clear brush, install the new tanks and troughs, and clear water lines. We will be able to camp at the park facilities overnight. So plan on coming to help, have fun, and meet people who share the same feelings you do about the blacktail deer of Coe Park.

If you have water tanks, water troughs, or other supplies to donate or you would like to lend a hand this spring, contact John Leonti at 408/995-5438 or Phil Bassetti at 408/674-5795. See you there!

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[1] Due to the abundant rainfall during January and February of this year, all the springs are running again, but maintenance is needed to keep them viable. Ed.

Park District News
by Kay S. Robinson

It really seems to be the busy time of year—for the wildflowers, the park staff, and the volunteers. I would like to keep you posted on a few things that are happening in and about the park. If you haven't visited the park lately, I'd urge you to do so NOW! The spring wildflower display is outstanding. And by next spring there will be another 11,000 acres of Coe to admire—the Redfern Ranch is currently in escrow, which will be a year-long process.

Plans for the visitor center expansion are proceeding. Sketches have been provided by architect Dan Quan, and we will be pursuing a contract for complete architectural plans and working drawings. At this time our fund base consists of $3,000 in member contributions, $5,000 pledged by PRA, and $9,000 in Volunteer Enhancement Funds (state contribution). Applying for grants from foundations and corporations is next on the agenda. If you have any ideas for assisting us in the goal of raising $250,000, please contact me or any PRA board member.

The Orestimba Trails Dedication on April 24-25 was this year's big event. It was a hugh success. The road into the Orestimba Corral was open to the public on both days. We estimate that 200 vehicles carrying over 500 people enjoyed the Coe backcountry on Saturday alone. Hikers, bicyclists and equestrians shared the trails and camped overnight.

Some of you may have read in the local papers about a project of the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) to create new reservoirs to provide for the burgeoning growth of Santa Clara County. These reservoirs would be storage facilities, not dependent upon runoff. Water would be piped in, held, then released as needed. The original feasibility study, completed in August 1991, considered 13 sites within the county, five of which would affect Henry W. Coe State Park. This field of choices was narrowed to five sites, three of which would affect Coe Park. Last week a 1¼" document arrived at my office detailing the salient points about each proposed reservoir site.

The "Los Osos" site is at the upper end of Coyote Reservoir, at the constriction of the canyon where Gilroy Hotsprings Road narrows. The water would back up into Cañada de los Osos (Cañada Road), Gilroy Hot Springs, and up to the 1,120' elevation within the park (about 3.5 miles up Coyote Creek Road past the locked gate). Obviously this would inundate Hotsprings Road and necessitate new routes to existing properties, homes, facilities, and the park.

The "Pacheco B" site is also outside the park on the North Fork of Pacheco Creek upstream from the current Pacheco Dam. The waters would back up into the park to a point half a mile upstream from the Big Culvert (where Kaiser-Aetna Road crosses Pacheco Creek). This would have serious impact on Native American sites, the Kaiser-Aetna Road access, and might affect future visitor use patterns (trails and campsites).

The "Coe" site is at China Hole. This proposal would have the greatest impact on the park. At a dam elevation of 1,490', 200,000 acre-feet of water could be stored. Over 10,000 acres would be inundated. This would impact current visitor usage (trail corridors and camps), historic sites (the de Anza expedition route), patrol routes, inholder access routes, and Native American sites.

The entire project is in the conceptual, feasibility-study stage. Consulting firms hired by SCVWD have had access to Coe Park, as well as to all the other sites, to study the geology and other factors of each area. Needless to say, park staff and management is opposed to any use of Coe other than its current use and what is provided for in the 1985 General Plan. SCVWD, being the inferior agency, does not have the right to condemn state lands. The process of converting use of the land to other than being a state park would require SCVWD to go back to the California State Legislature, which originally allowed the creation of Coe Park. The legislature would then have to weigh the merits of the proposal.

SCVWD is still actively pursuing the idea of finding more water storage capacity within (or outside) the county. After I digest the newest report, I will give you further details in the next issue of the *Ponderosa*.

Proposed Reservoirs in Coe State Park

Site Name	Location	Acre-feet
Los Osos	Gilroy Hotsprings Rd.	170,000–262,000
Pacheco B	Pacheco Creek	200,000–327,000
Coe	Coyote Creek at China Hole	100,000–300,000

The PRA Calendar

Saturday, May 1: The spring **Trails Day,** which was postponed by April showers, has been rescheduled for May 1. Remember to wear sturdy shoes and bring water. Please call Leif Larsen (408/779-7785) for additional information.

Tuesday, May 4: The **Eta Aquarid meteor shower** will occur, with 10–40 meteors per hour. The highest concentration of meteors can be seen around 4 a.m. to the southeast.

Wednesday, May 5: The Nunamiut Eskimos called the fifth **full moon** of the year the "Moon When the Ice Goes Out of the Rivers," associating it with the thaws of late spring.

Sunday, [illegible] the PRA's ever-popular **Mother's Day Breakfas[illegible]** ev[illegible]ells su[illegible]very [illegible]ly so order your tickets now. Please ca[illegible]e par[illegible]uster (408/779-2728) for additional information.

SOLD OUT

Thursday, May 13: The next meeting of the PRA **Board of Directors** will take place at 7:30 p.m. at the Classic Square Center, Morgan Hill. Please call Barbara Bessey (415/851-7813) to receive an agenda for the meeting in advance or to receive additional information. All PRA members are invited to attend.

Saturday, May 15: Join members of the **San Jose Astronomical Association** as they view the stars on the knoll approximately 100 yards off of the back country road by the park headquarters. They will set up their telescopes for star gazing just after dark. The public is invited to attend.

Friday, May 21: A **partial solar eclipse** can be seen at 5:55 a.m. (at sunrise).

Friday, June 4: **Full moon.** A **total lunar eclipse** will occur just before dawn, with the moon beginning to enter the darkest part of the earth's shadow at 4:11 a.m. and totality beginning at 5:12 a.m.

Monday, June 21: **Summer Solstice** is when the sun rises and sets at its northernmost points along the horizon and spends the greatest length of time in the sky for any day of the year.

Welcome New and Rejoining Members

by Lee Dittmann, Membership Chair

David E. Allen, Jr., Los Altos
David, Terri, & Mike Anthony family, San Jose
Dan & Katherine Greenwood, Manteca
Tobey Hall, Mountain View
James C. Hann, Jr., San Jose
Ronda Hawkins, Santa Clara
Barbara Jean Henderson, Paicines
Patricia Howard-Maki, San Jose
John Kolb, Gustine
E.R. Maisen, Jr., San Jose
Doug Meyers, San Juan Bautista
Janis & Peter Nelson, Los Altos
Leon & Richard Thomas, Nevada City
Charlene & Hugh Upton, Morgan Hill

If you joined on or after the end of March, we will welcome you in the next issue of the *Ponderosa*.

Forget something?

Like maybe your Pine Ridge Association membership renewal? If your mailing label says "1992," then your membership has expired, and this will be the last issue of the *Ponderosa* you receive. You will also not be entitled to PRA membership benefits, such as the 15 percent discount on purchases of books, maps, posters, T-shirts, and more from the park visitor center. More importantly, you will not have the satisfaction of supporting the only organization devoted to providing educational and interpretive assistance to the largest state park in northern California at this critical time when state budgets are being slashed and parks are being threatened with closures. Wouldn't you like to renew your membership now?

Dues start at $10.00 for one person, $20.00 for families—with a new half-price discount rate for full-time students and seniors age 62 and over. If you can afford to send more, we would especially welcome contributions to the visitor center expansion fund; any amount would assist us in bringing this worthwhile project to fruition.

Please send your check or money order to:
The Pine Ridge Association
P.O. Box 846
Morgan Hill, CA 95038-0846

Thank you!

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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. Articles and artwork relating to the history, natural history, and management of the park are welcome. Please send submissions to the editors care of Henry W. Coe State Park, P.O. Box 846, Morgan Hill, CA 95038; or call 415/851-7813.

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