THE PINE RIDGE ASSOCIATION • HENRY W. COE STATE PARK •

The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

May 1996

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

Images

The stories that come from under my brim rarely begin as words or ideas. They almost always originate as images. We all store countless images in our minds, images that go back to the days of our early childhood.

Many years ago, park volunteer Judy Mason began to refer to particularly beautiful days as "wrap-um-up" days, and I soon learned that a typical wrap-um-up day was one that was warm and bright and full of wildflowers. I've always understood what makes certain days special to Judy, but I didn't have the slightest idea what she meant by "wrap-um-up," and I usually just nodded in agreement. Finally one evening I asked, "What in the heck is a wrap-um-up day?" She explained, "When you're out enjoying gorgeous spring days, what you do is wrap them up and store them away in your head. Then, when you're stuck in the office on a dull winter day, you can close your eyes, unwrap one of those days, and enjoy its beauty all over again." Judy's ability to recall vivid images from the past probably helps to explain why her artwork is so good.

Dave Sellers has shown me subtle colors, textures, and patterns that I would never have seen without his help. In one of his paintings, the one that hangs over my mantle, a mountain lion rests beside a shallow pool of water. The afternoon light, reflected off the surface of the water, has turned the nearby rocks a brilliant yet subtle shade of purple, a shade that I've never noticed in nature. Dave has found that color though, and the color looks as natural in the painting as the tawny fur of the lion, which on closer inspection turns out to be a mixture of colors, with shades of red, brown, black, grey, and white.

Coe Park has been enriched by the artwork of its volunteers. We have Lee Dittmann's fine, precise drawings, Kathy Paivinen's lovely mural downstairs, and Rosse Hemeon's skillful drawings of the buildings around headquarters. I've heard rumors that new volunteers Paul Brown and Michael Torralba are quite talented, and there must be some artists among us whose work we have yet to see and others who are unaware of their artistic potential.

I started my career in art at an early age. I drew, colored, painted, even used my fingers as paint brushes, and my early works were hung in the galleries of grade school. Art has

Inside this issue . . .

Fond memories of the Redfern property

The origin of Coe Park's bird checklist

Champion Tree Registry and drawing for prizes

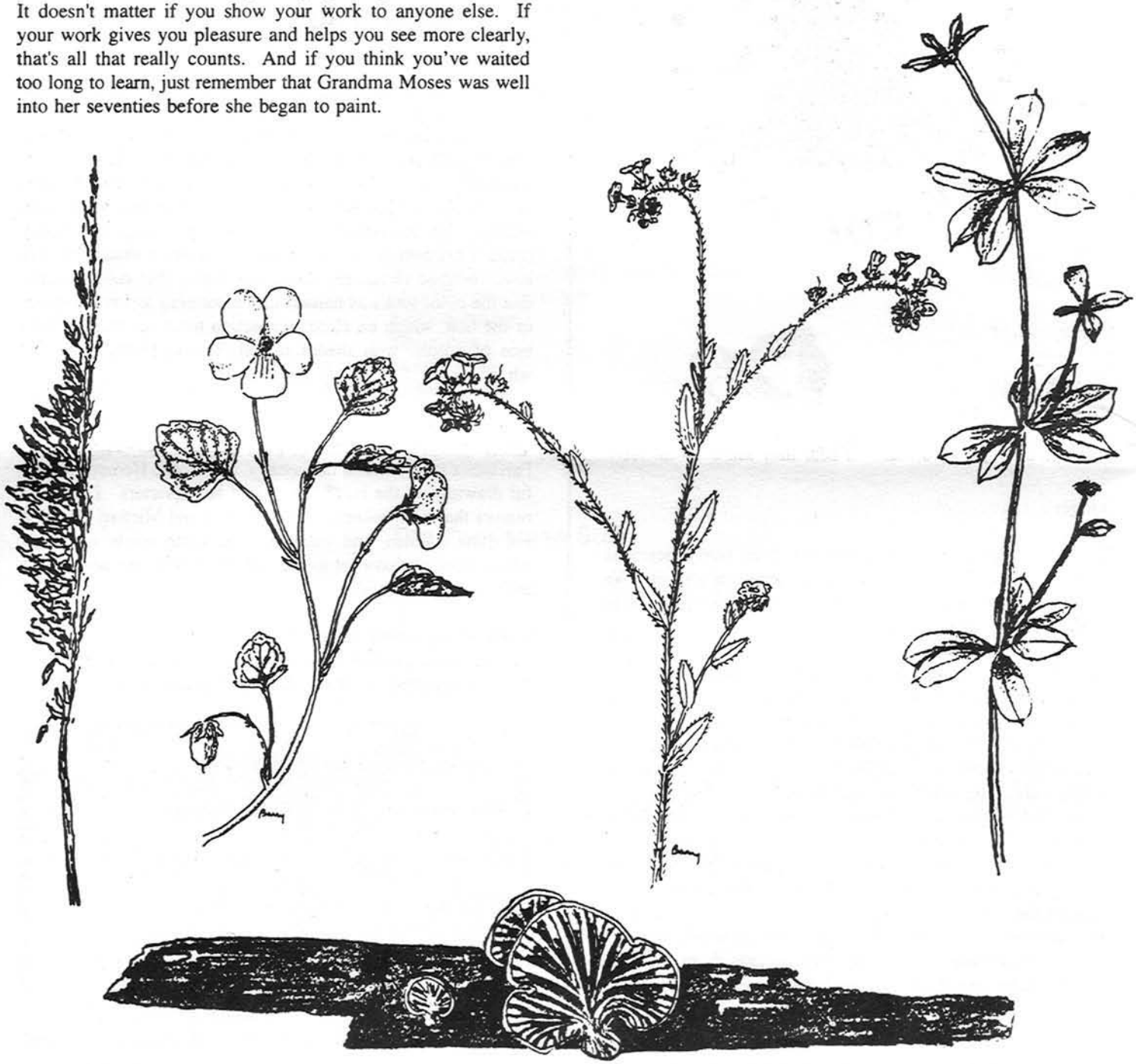
Calendar of upcoming events

. . . and more!

Recycled Paper

given me a wonderful way to express the pictures I see in my head and, more important, it's taught me to see things more clearly. I sketch and paint primarily for my own enjoyment, but I also enjoy sharing my work with others. In the rest of this issue, I'll share with you some images from under my brim.

Oh, by the way . . . . If you've never considered yourself an artist, but you doodle a bit or you get a vague urge every now and then to sketch something, I hope you'll give artwork a try. It doesn't matter if you show your work to anyone else. If your work gives you pleasure and helps you see more clearly, that's all that really counts. And if you think you've waited too long to learn, just remember that Grandma Moses was well into her seventies before she began to paint.



Interview with Bill Childers

by Teddy Goodrich

Bill Childers was president of the deer club that operated out of the Willson Camp in the Redfern for many years. (The Redfern property has been added to the southern end of Coe Park.) He knows the area intimately, and his words are a priceless source of information. As I transcribed this interview, I realized the truth of the words his daughter told me, "That place meant the whole world to him."

There's been a deer club up there since the beginning of time. All I can tell you about is from the time that Floyd Redfern bought it. Alex Balanesi was president of the club at that time.

It used to be in the Orestimbers [*sic*] that is part of Coe Park now. And all that area back there, they used to hunt that. Pete Fillippelli, he was one of the old timers. They used to take mules back into that country. Stay a week or two at a time. They didn't take in any meat; they had to kill their meat.

It used to be, so I hear, though I never met him, that there was a good friend of Floyd Redfern's that would come down to the Milias Hotel. He was a good friend of Floyd's and all the old timers, too, even before Floyd bought into it. You'd come in there to the Milias and get to drinking, and if you wanted in the deer club, you'd get over close to Dalt Edwards. You'd buy him a couple of drinks. "I hear they kill a lot of deer." You'd buy him another drink. And by the time he got that down, he'd say, "Well, give me a hundred dollars, and you can join our club." Well, he'd get the hundred dollars. Floyd never did get it. Floyd said he never did get a penny. But he didn't care; he liked Dalt.

Floyd charged us about $350 per person, certainly not more than $500. There were rules. No guests, no ladies, no nothing. Strictly a deer hunting club and that's all. You could kill deer and a few rattlesnakes. Certain weekends during deer season, that's all they could go.

I was president of the club for a long time. I came and went year 'round. Sorta kept an eye on things, 'cause there was a lot of poachers. The club kept the road up and built the cabin.

The Dexter homestead? When I first went in, in the early '60s, there used to be a house there. Somebody burned it.

We called the place between Dexter Canyon and where you look down on the Kelly Lake area the Brumer. There used to be a metal sign there that said Jack White property. I don't know how he made a living, but he had a big spring at that house. [The property was owned by John White, Gilroy area constable 1898–1934.]

Phil Gonzalez owned the ranch before Floyd did. I didn't know him, but I'd heard a lot about him. A man named Cummins owned the ranch before Gonzalez.

I asked Mr. Childers how some of the names on the map came into being.

Spike Jones Road: Alex Balanesi, Ray Robinson, and another one or two were down in there, and they jumped a bunch of deer. Alex and somebody else went down this steep canyon. They saw the deer, and there was a nice buck with them. The deer went into a patch of poison oak. Alex wanted to kill the buck.

Alex's friend volunteered to chase them out of the brush. When he comes out, I'll holler "shoot," and when I holler "shoot," you shoot! The big buck ran the spike out first; they always do. The big one always is last. Whoever it was in the jeep hollered "Shoot! There he is! Shoot! Shoot!" Well, Alex shot and killed the spike. And that is why they call that Spike Jones. That's the way it got its name.

Wasno Ridge: They went out on the ridge and slept. Come evening, they came in kind of late. Everybody was already in, getting ready for dinner. "What's the matter? What are you doing coming in so late? You got a deer in there and couldn't get it out?"
"No."
"Well, what happened?"
"Well, we took a nap. We hunted and hunted and hunted that place, and there was no deer!"
It's been Wasno ever since.

Hurricane Canyon: The wind always blows up that canyon. Nice cool place when it's hot. You can go down to Hurricane and lie down in one of those draws and sleep. And once you go down there, it's worse than a hurricane to get out of it.

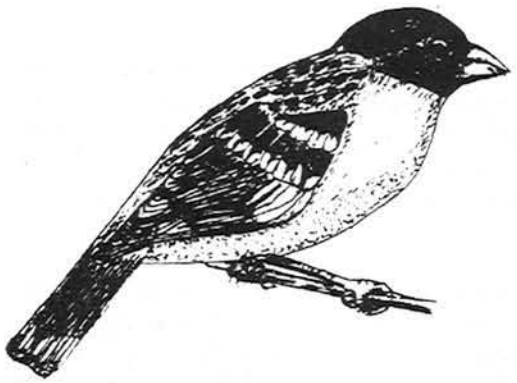
The Bowl: There's a lot of water down in the bowl. The cattle always stay in there. Someone at one time, down in the bottom of the bowl, started to build a house. The lumber, the tin, everything, is right there next to a spring. I think the rattlesnakes must have run him out. There's more rattlesnakes in that bowl than you can shoot.

Edith Lake: Named for Ed Smith's wife. Ed Smith was foreman before Al Hutton.

Whiskey Gate: Used to be an old tree there that was hollow. Ed Smith, that was the only gate he would open. He wanted to get out and open that gate, and he'd go over to that hollow

tree and pull a bottle out and have a snort. He'd better not run out, either. He didn't buy it. [The deer club kept the bottle in the tree for him.]

Bill's Hill: That's me! Rick [Bill's grandson] killed a deer up on top of it, and we like to never have got it down. So Bill's Hill was off the premises. You don't hunt Bill's Hill. I like to have lost that old jeep up there trying to get out!



PRA Profiles: James Yurchenco and Amy Lauterbach

by Barbara Bessey

If you enjoy watching birds at Coe Park, you may already have purchased the checklist of the park's birds that is sold in the visitor center. This checklist presents a list of the birds that have been seen within the boundaries of the park, estimates of their populations during two-week intervals throughout the year, an indication of whether the birds breed within the park, and information about their preferred habitat. Have you wondered just how such a comprehensive checklist is compiled?

This bird checklist was the creation of PRA friends James Yurchenco and Amy Lauterbach; it was published under the auspices of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. The checklist was a project that took them many years to complete. Jim and Amy have been hiking the backcountry of Coe for the past fifteen years, making ten to twelve trips per year. Each time they visit the park, they make notes of which birds they see, how many of each, and any evidence of nesting. By making regular loops to particular places in the park, they developed a very good sense of the bird populations throughout the year.

When compiling the checklist, Jim received bird sighting data contributed by PRA members Lee Sims, Ranger Barry Breckling, Kevin Gilmartin, and me. We also enjoy hiking in the park and keeping notes about which birds we see. In fact, before Jim's checklist was published, the only listing of park birds that was available was one prepared by Lee Sims. Jim and Amy also received regular sighting information from geologist Clark Blake, who was performing research in the Gill Ranch area, and from birding colleague Bill Bousman.

Jim and Amy spent many hours at Coe searching for evidence of nesting behavior as part of the Santa Clara Breeding Bird Atlas project, of which Amy was coordinator. This effort was conducted from 1987 to 1992. The area around the visitor center is in Santa Clara County, and it was relatively easy to search for nesting birds there. But it was more of an effort to canvass the areas around Mt. Sizer, Mississippi Lake, Mustang Flat, Rooster Comb, Kelly Cabin Canyon, Pacheco Falls, and the Gilroy Hot Springs. Jim used the information about which birds were confirmed nesters in the park obtained from the Breeding Bird Atlas in preparing the Coe Park checklist.

A lot of effort went into estimating the population of each species of birds throughout the year. Once prevalence had been estimated, then further work was needed to augment the records with nesting data and habitat preference. Jim did all the layouts for the checklist, plus the annual time lines, himself; this alone was a labor-intensive effort.

Since the checklist was originally published in 1992, a number of additional species of birds have been confirmed as nesting within the park. One exciting addition is the Horned Lark. Many years ago, they were observed to nest near the Hoover Landing Strip; however, in the last year, multiple confirmed sightings of breeding Horned Larks have been made in the newly acquired Redfern property. At present, discussions are taking place with Jim as to how the existing bird checklist can be updated for future visitors to Coe Park.

Thanks, Jim and Amy, for your hard work and dedication in compiling a bird checklist that helps all of us appreciate the wonders of Coe Park!

Reward Offered for Champion Trees!

by Mat Kidd

A Champion Tree Registry has been set up for Henry W. Coe State Park. It is based on the Society of American Foresters' National Champion Tree Registry. This valuable interpretive program encourages people to be observant while hiking, bicycling, or horseback riding within the park. The goal of this program is to identify the largest trees in the park. If we know their location, we can monitor their health and study their growing conditions.

To participate in this endeavor, pick up a copy of the Champion Tree Registry information packet the next time you visit Coe State Park. Ask one of the park employees or volunteers for it at the visitor center when you check in (**it's free!**). Within the registry packet you will find simple methods to measure trees using commonly available items such as a measuring tape, yardstick, some rope, plus your enthusiasm. The names of people who find the three biggest of each species of tree, along with all the particulars, will be listed on the registry located in the visitor center. The registry will be updated periodically.

You can win a prize for registering trees in the park. As an incentive for you to help us find the grandest trees in Coe, there will be a drawing held on December 1st, 1996, to give away the prizes. The drawing is open to those who submit, in good faith, filled out nomination forms by November 17th. The following books will be awarded as prizes—all prizes are from the PRA store located within the visitor center at park headquarters.

1. *Oaks of California,* **hardbound edition ($30 value)**
2. *California Forests and Woodlands: A Natural History,* **hardbound edition ($30 value)**
3. *A Natural History of Western Trees,* **trade paperback ($20 value)**
4. *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Trees: Western Region,* **trade paperback ($19 value)**
5. *Sacred Trees,* **trade paperback ($16 value)**
6. **through 10.** *Pacific Coast Tree Finder,* **paperback ($3 value)**

The glorious trees of Coe await you!

Park News

by Kay S. Robinson
Park Superintendent

This year's Coe Backcountry Weekend on April 27–28 was a resounding success. A total of 361 vehicles carrying 1,157 people entered the park to explore the Orestimba Wilderness and other locales such as Mustang Peak, Coon Creek, Pacheco Falls, and Burra Burra Peak. Ninety-four volunteers gave 819 hours to make it the success it was. Volunteers and park staff alike worked furiously the last two weeks before the event to repair trails, cut out poison oak, prepare chemical toilets for use, and grade roads.

With about 140 miles of graded roads in the park, including the new Redfern addition, it takes all our effort year-round to stay abreast of the workload. This year's winter rains again added their fair share of erosion and delayed our attack on the roads. Once our grader is "on its feet" again (down for repairs at the moment), the roads on the west side of the park will be our priority. In terms of development of visitor facilities, there are a few grants of which we are taking advantage. We have submitted a request for $200,000 from an Environmental Enhancement Mitigation Program (administered by CalTrans) for development of facilities at Bell Station and Dowdy Ranch. This would allow us to start on road improvements, water and sanitary facilities, and improved parking facilities. Another submission for $10,000 through the National Recreational Trails Funding Act will realign the Jackson Trail. This trail extends from the Anza Trail up to the top of the hill, affording direct access to the Redfern and Kelly Lake. The existing trail is narrow and steep. The new one will be longer but gentler, with breathtaking views to the south and west. We should know within the next four to six months of our success with these submissions.

I've written before of the Fatjo Project, a new 7,000-acre park at the top of Pacheco Pass. It is coming before the State Park and Recreation Commission for naming and classification on May 21 in the San José area. This property has wonderful potential as a hiking, bicycling, and equestrian park. Its terrain and vegetation are similar to Coe, with grasslands, oak savannas, and steep wooded canyons. If you would like information on the time and location of the hearing, please contact me at 408/848-4008 or the Four Rivers District Office at 209/826-1196.

One of the most dynamic forces in the Four Rivers District for the last decade or so has been District Superintendent John Kolb. His vision has always been to provide the highest quality service to the people of California. He has done that

through his leadership and support of the park staff and volunteers. Now it is time to say farewell to John, as he has been selected as the Superintendent V of North Coast Redwoods District. He, his wife Linda, and son Brian will be leaving in late May and relocating to the Eureka area. I know that I, the Coe staff, and all the PRA members and volunteers who have gotten to know John will miss him greatly. He has been supportive, inspirational, and a good friend. We wish him well!

Reflections

So often we have asked, "What is the meaning of Life, what is the purpose of Life, and what is our purpose here on this planet?" At Coe Park, I have interacted with Nature and with a group of human beings whom I respect and learn from. Here is some of what I have learned. Life is meaning, and Life is purpose. There can be no other meaning or purpose to Life, because Life itself is complete. To do the most good to Life and for Life rings true throughout all levels of our being.

Doug Meyers, Coe Park Ranger

Contemplating the lace-like fabric of streams outspread over the mountains, we are reminded that everything is flowing—going somewhere, animals and so-called lifeless rocks as well as water. Thus the snow flows fast or slow in grand beauty-making glaciers and avalanches; the air in majestic floods carrying minerals, plant leaves, seeds, spores, with streams of music and fragrance; water streams carrying rocks both in solution and in the form of mud particles, sand, pebbles, and boulders. Rocks flow from volcanoes like water from springs, and animals flock together and flow in currents modified by stepping, leaping, gliding, flying, swimming. The stars go streaming through space pulsed on and on forever like blood globules in Nature's warm heart.

John Muir, from *My First Summer in the Sierra*

Stirring from the earth is music!
A symphony in every little thing!
The very smallest growing flowers
Bring the songs of spring.

Music from the earth and sky,
From the boundless oceans deep!
Rhythm of the universe,
Bringing joyous laughter,
Bowing heads to weep!

This is nature's symphony,
Deep and stirring every life.
Reaching far beyond us,
To the distant stars that glitter
From the darkness of the night.

Lifting now our heads to hear it,
Opening wide our hearts,
Each of us in our small way
Playing but a tiny part.

You! And you! And you out yonder,
Each a great musician be,
In this music of the earth and sky:
Nature's greatest symphony.

Sada S. Coe, excerpt from *Music of the Earth, The Lost Trails of Santa Clara*

Membership & Contributions
by Lee Dittmann

Spring has not only brought us abundant water and wildflowers, we have also gained many new members. As of April 20th the number of PRA memberships stood at 321. Thank you all for your support, and welcome to the Pine Ridge Association!

Thomasene Dutton, Cupertino
Debbie Erwin, San José
Laura Filice, Santa Clara
Greg Gomes, Newman
Merle A. Gomes, San José
Rich Graham, San José
Robin Hayr, San José
Daniel T. Hellman, San José
Allen Ishibashi, Morgan Hill
Susanna Moore, Berkeley
Viviana Sanchez-Chopitea, San José
Lee Van Pelt, Menlo Park

New Contributors to the Visitor Center Expansion Fund

Merle A. Gomes
Mike & Erin Monroe

A Special Thanks To:

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for renewing their Corporate/Business Membership. Members in this category contribute a minimum of $100 annually. We thank them for their continued support!

Did You Know?

Not all conifers are evergreen. For example, the dawn redwood and larches are deciduous.

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PRA Calendar

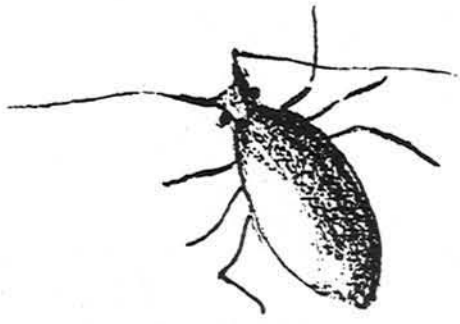
Saturdays and Sundays, March–June: The **Coyote Creek entrance** to the park near Gilroy Hot Springs will be open on weekends from March through June. Visitors can backpack or spend the day; there is also room for horse trailers. Call the Coe Park headquarters for more information (408/779-2728).

Saturdays and Sundays, March–May: The **1996 season of interpretive hikes, walks, and evening programs** continues through May. On Saturday mornings at 11 a.m., hikes will begin in front of the visitor center. Evening programs will be held at 8 p.m. on Saturdays in the lower level of the visitor center. Guided wildflower walks are conducted on Sundays at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. On *Monday, May 27,* there will be two farewell-to-spring wildflower walks (10 a.m. and 1 p.m.). Please call the Coe Park headquarters for more information (408/779-2728).

Saturday, May 18: Join the San José Astronomical Association members as they view **celestial splendors above Coe Park.** The public is invited to attend. Call the Astronomical Association's events hotline for more details about this activity and to receive information about upcoming summer viewings at Coe Park (408/559-1221).

Saturday and Sunday, August 3 & 4: Garage sale to raise funds for the Visitor Center Expansion Fund. If you have items you wish to donate, or if you would like to help with the garage sale, please call Barry Breckling at Coe Park headquarters (408/779-2728). A meeting to plan the event will be held at the park in June.

Ranger **Barry Breckling** and Coe Park Volunteer **Judy Robinson** will exchange marriage vows on Saturday, May 18, at the top of Pine Ridge. We wish them much happiness and joy! More information about the wedding will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.



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The Ponderosa is a periodic publication of the Pine Ridge Association. The PRA's 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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