The **Ponderosa**

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

September 1998

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

Aestival

Some people who visit Coe Park during a summer heat wave may vow never to return and might tell their friends that the park is a place to avoid. Understandable, I suppose, but we know that if they'd discovered the park in the spring or fall, they'd probably rave to their friends about the vast, beautiful, peaceful park they found practically next door to the bustle of Silicon Valley. You can have a great time exploring the park in the summer if you're properly prepared. You'll find no crowds, you're more likely to see wildlife, especially around the dwindling water holes, and you'll enjoy treasures that are unknown to those who avoid the outdoors during the hotter months of the year.

Hot, dry, often breezeless days, day after day. That's late summer in the Diablo Range. It's easy for people living in such a climate to get by. They can simply turn up the air conditioning or jump in the swimming pool. Wild animals weather the heat pretty well, too. They can hide in the shade or retreat into burrows or crannies until the cool relief of the evening. But what about plants? They can't take a dip, and they can't run and hide. How do plants make it through the relentless heat of summer?

Shallow-rooted grasses and other annuals survive this harsh time of year as seeds, the plants having died as the heat set in. Some perennials, like the wild onions and perennial grasses, die back to their underground parts, which remain alive, but inactive, through the summer months. The deep-rooted pines and oaks keep their summertime greenery by searching far underground for pockets of water.

Most plants bloom and produce seeds in the spring when their environment is mild and moist. Not all, though. Long-time Coe Park hiker and photographer Dave Hildebrand insists that you can visit the park any time during the year and find wildflowers. And he's right. In fact, these rugged hills actually have a second major blooming season, a season called ***aestival***. Few hikers are familiar with the charms of aestival because it reaches its peak during the months least popular for hiking, August and September.

If you're searching for aestival flowers, visit a creek. Lots of robust, showy aestival bloomers grow along creek beds. If you walk the gravelly and mostly waterless creek beds of late summer, you'll find the friendly golden faces of California sunflowers reaching for the sun on stalks often over ten feet tall. If a wandering monarch butterfly flutters by, you might

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Recycled Paper

see it alight on a narrow-leaf milkweed, a slender plant with skinny leaves and a fireworks explosion of tiny white blossoms. Nearby you might find a leather root plant with its glowing purple flower spikes or a Fuller's teasel with its crowded rows of delicate lavender flowers nestled in a spiny head. At the edge of a stagnant pool, you might find a small bramble of wild roses with their simple, elegant pink flowers. In the driest gravelly places, look for the tiny yellow faces of downy monkeyflowers and keep an eye out for their larger relative, the scarlet monkeyflower, with its brilliant lipstick-red flowers.

It's not hard to imagine how creekbed plants thrive in the hot months of summer. They may be growing in an area that's dusty dry on the surface, but their roots reach for moisture below the surface where water persists even in the driest years.

A bright green leafy plant grows in the dry gravel of summer creek bottoms. I call it "cool plant" because its damp foliage is amazingly cool to the touch, even on the hottest days. It's a member of the Evening-Primrose family, and its "real" common name is dense-flowered boisduvalia. Cool plant has long roots that reach deep into the earth to find water. It sucks up moisture and pumps water out of its leaves, working much like a swamp cooler to air-condition its environment.

Lots of aestival plants grow far from creekbeds, and it seems incredible that they can survive and even thrive during the blistering heat waves of August and September. Summer does have its advantages though. With fewer green plants around, there's less competition for moisture, pollinators, and nutrients. But the hot, dry air is deadly to plants that run out of water; so aestival plants of dry areas have developed survival strategies, most of them involving moisture retention.

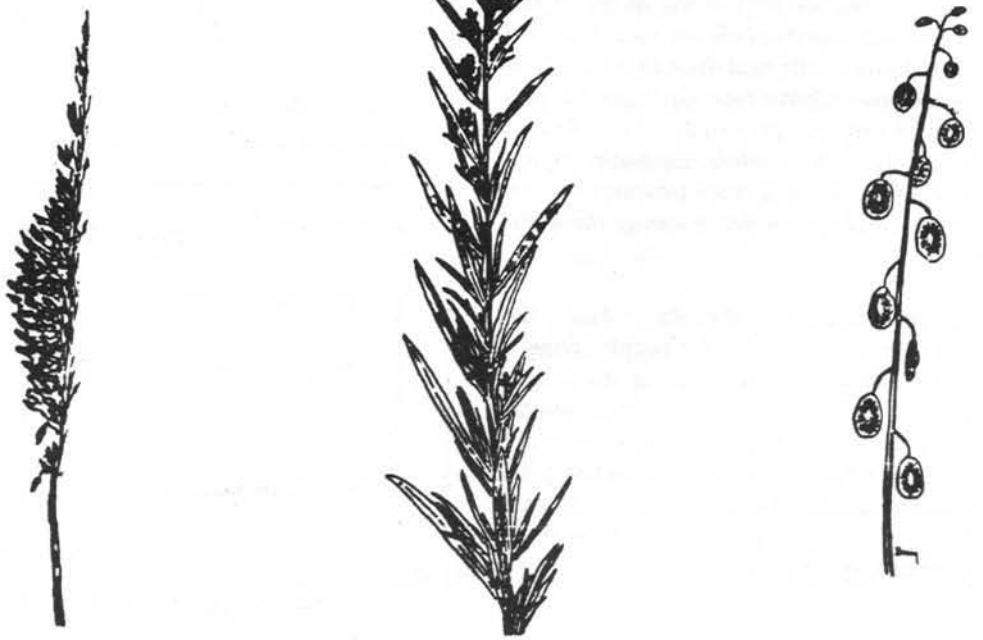
Some plants turn the thin edge of their leaves to the sun to reduce moisture loss, and many of them have grayish foliage, which reflects the hot rays of the sun better than green foliage does. Summer blooming plants often have fewer leaves and smaller leaves than their spring-blooming relatives. A plant with less leaf surface loses less moisture, but it also grows more slowly than leafier plants. Aestival plants don't have to hurry though. They've got plenty of time during the long days of summer to photosynthesize and reach full growth.

All plant leaves have small holes called stomas, through which gases are exchanged and precious moisture is lost. On summer plants, the stomas are fewer and smaller, and most of them are on the underside of the leaves, an area that's less accessible to the sun's drying rays.

Summer plants are often thick skinned, and many of them have a protective coating on their stems and leaves that helps insulate the moist inner parts of the plants from the heat of the sun. Sometimes the protective coating is a layer of silvery hairs or scales, and sometimes it's a waxy or sticky oil with a pungent aroma.

The smelly oils on some summer plants serve another purpose. Green plants in summer stand out in stark contrast to the dry yellow remains of spring growth, and they're a natural attraction to herbivores in search of fresh foliage, but the plants with strong smelling odors are unappetizing to most plant eaters.

If you're willing to brave the warm air of aestival in the park, you'll be treated to bright colors and intriguing smells.



If you hike to Miller Field or Mahoney Meadows, you'll find bright yellow fields of tarweed. If you leave the trail and wander through the tarweed, your pants or bare legs may end up with a layer of sticky plant parts, but the heady aroma of the plant's oils might make the detour worthwhile.

If you detect a vinegar or turpentine smell during your summer excursions, look for vinegar weed, a showy little plant with small blue curly-anthered flowers.

You can find California yampah in summer creek beds. Another species, Kellogg's yampah, grows in shady areas on dry hills and has sweet-smelling seeds. Its flat-topped heads of tiny white flowers perched on tall, willowy stems stand out in the muted tones of dry summer grasses and lift the spirits of people who miss the flowers of spring.

My favorite summer flower is the California fuchsia. It grows on dry, open hillsides and seems to prefer rocky areas. Its beautiful red trumpet flowers are a treat to hummingbirds and a joy to people who have time to stop and take a closer look. On open hillsides, you can also find scattered clusters of cudweed asters, scraggly plants with sparse gray foliage and dainty purple-rayed, yellow-centered flowers.

If you search dry shady areas and you get really lucky, you might find the little white flowers of the plant I call neverbloom. Its real common name is broad-leaf aster. Since it grows in the shade, it doesn't need skinny, gray leaves like its relative the cudweed aster. Most years, neverblooms just sit there and never bloom. In special years, though, some of the plants decide it's time to show off.

This is one of those special years. So why don't you grab a hat, fill a couple of water bottles with icy cold water, and take a morning or evening aestival hike in Coe Park.

Where There's Smoke, There's . . . Germination

by Winslow Briggs

For uncounted centuries, fire has been a major ecological force shaping the vegetation in Henry W. Coe State Park (and indeed throughout the west). Before the days of fire suppression, fire struck the meadows, mountains, and valleys in and around Coe Park as often as every twenty-five to fifty years. Native Americans deliberately burned brush to reduce cover in which game animals could hide, and lightening fires sometimes burned unchecked for days, weeks, or even months.

As a consequence, a great many plant species are adapted to fire. It is well known that the cones of certain pine species, the so-called closed cone members of the genus *Pinus,* require heat in order to open and release their seeds. The knobcone pine (*Pinus attenuata*), common in the drier northeastern regions of Big Basin State Park, is one example, and the bishop pine (*Pinus muricata*), found on the ridges of the Point Reyes National Seashore, is another. A brief exposure—as little as a few seconds—to temperatures near the boiling point of water are more than enough to induce the cones to arch open, causing the tightly appressed scales to separate and release the seeds. Longer exposure, of course, kills the seeds, but in many fire situations, just such brief heat treatments occur with sufficient frequency to ensure that viable seeds are scattered to the ground. Within two weeks after the recent fire on the Inverness Ridge of the Point Reyes National Seashore, the ground in places was littered with bishop pine seeds. While small mammals and birds almost certainly made off with most of these seeds—a real bonanza in their recently blackened world—a few will germinate, seedlings will take root, and a new bishop pine forest will emerge.

The cones of the giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) can hardly be classified as closed. However, sequoia seedlings grow very slowly and do not compete well with seedlings of the many brushy species found in and around the sequoia groves in the Sierra Nevada. Where occasional fires have kept the brushy species down, sequoia seedlings have flourished. With fire suppression by man, however, they have not had a chance, and until recently, few viable seedlings could be found. Deliberate controlled burns by various land managers have reversed the situation, and once again the sequoia seedlings that must in a century or two replace the giants of today are well on their way. In this case, the mechanism by which fire helps ensure species survival is quite different: it simply suppresses the competition.

The latter picture is hardly one-sided, however. The brushy species have more than one way of fighting back. In the first place, a fairly large number of these shrubs have seeds that simply require a heat shock to break their water-impervious

seed coat and initiate germination. Coe Park has more than its share of these. Among them are the seeds of buck brush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*), chaparral whitethorn (*Ceanothus leucodermis*), jim brush (*Ceanothus oliganthus*), deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*), and Sierra morning glory (*Calystegia malacophylla pedicellata*). You can find every one of these species somewhere in Coe Park's rich chaparral flora. All have seeds that respond dramatically to a brief exposure to temperatures near the boiling point of water: after many years of dormancy, they germinate. A number of annual species respond in a similar fashion. The effective temperature window is a narrow one, however: if the temperature is even 30° or 40° Fahrenheit above the boiling point, germination is reduced, and above that temperature the seeds are killed.

Recently, it has become increasingly clear that response to heat shock is not the whole story. In the aftermath of a fire, germination of certain species can be detected in adjacent areas untouched by the fire and too remote to have been exposed even transiently to elevated temperatures. Indeed in several cases heat treatment of any sort is detrimental. What these species have in common is that they germinate following exposure to **smoke.** California sagebrush (*Artemesia californica*) and Eastwood manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa*), another pair of extremely common chaparral plants found in Coe Park, both fall into this category. (Note that our favorite giant Coe Park manzanita, the big berry manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glauca*), fails to respond either to heat or to smoke—a sad exception but a failing that is obviously not fatal to the species. It remains flourishing despite millennia of fire incidents.)

Direct exposure to smoke is not necessarily required. Consider the following: twelve different species have seeds that show dramatically increased germination when sown on soil that includes just a bit of ground up charred wood. Included on this list are chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), chaparral clematis (*Clematis lasiantha*), golden yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*), and even poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), all but the golden yarrow common in Coe Park chaparral. Here are some numbers for golden yarrow: for seeds collected from standing plants and germinated on water alone, only 13% made it. With a bit of ground charred wood added, the number rose to 63%. When they were germinated on soil scraped up from under a mature chaparral stand, the number was again low—about 23%. However, when the soil came from a burned chaparral area, even without charred bits of wood included, the number was a whopping 71%.

What on earth do smoke and charred wood have in common? Ecologists Jon Keeley and C. J. Fotheringham recently used the plant *Emmenanthe penduliflora* to provide an answer to the puzzle. *E. penduliflora* (better known as whispering bells; who names these plants anyway??) is a species few of us have ever heard of, but which was all over Manzanita Point for the first couple of years after the recent controlled burn. The two ecologists did some really simple experiments: they either exposed seeds directly to smoke, germinated them on filter paper or sand that had been pretreated with smoke, exposed them to water that had been smoke-treated, or simply put them in a chamber near a moist smoke-treated filter paper. In every case involving smoke treatment, either indirect or direct, an exposure as brief as a single minute was sufficient to induce every single seed to get with it and germinate. Without smoke treatment, not one single seed initiated growth. There is one component in smoke, persisting in charred wood (adsorbed to the charcoal and only slowly released), that brought on the dramatic increase in the germination of sensitive seeds: this component is nitric oxide (NO_2). This gas, highly soluble in water, is produced in a wildfire principally by the burning of plant proteins and was the only significant component in smoke found to affect germination in whispering bells (I still think it's a dumb name).

Keeley and Fotheringham did another ingenious experiment: they compared water uptake after either heat shock or smoke treatment both for whispering bells (smoke-induced germination) and a chaparral plant showing heat shock-induced germination (*Ceanothus megacarpus,* a species not found in Coe Park, but almost certainly representative of the Coe Park species in its responses to heat), to see how they would affect initial water uptake. Water uptake is the first event leading a dormant seed into the germination pathway and is absolutely essential to bring seeds into that pathway. The difference between the two species was dramatic: the *Ceanothus* seeds failed to take up any water whatsoever without heat shock, confirming that they needed something to break their waterproof seed coat in order to germinate, whereas ample water uptake by whispering bells seeds occurred independent of heat shock treatment.

Fire clearly leads to germination and ultimate survival through several different pathways. There are actually some species that respond best to a combination of heat shock and smoke in the laboratory, although in nature it is hard to conceive of a situation in which a seed exposed to heat wasn't also exposed to smoke! Regardless, after the next prescribed burn in Coe Park's chaparral, make a point of wandering over the burn some time during or after the next rainy period when green things are reappearing under foot. You'll see seedlings of numerous chaparral species in the process of reestablishing this brushy environment from a long dormant seed bank in the barren soil, induced to germinate by heat or smoke or both. However, you will also see plants such as whispering bells, annuals that emerge briefly after a fire, set seed, and deposit their seeds in the seed bank to await the NO_2 fix that will induce them to germinate perhaps some fifty years later.

Question number one: Since the various oxides of nitrogen, including NO_2, are important components of automobile-generated smog, how will the chaparral communities in the Los Angeles basin be affected over time? Will smoke-dependent species appear in the absence of fire? It is really too early to tell, but given what we know about the deposition of nitrogen oxides from smog, it would be surprising if they don't.

Question number two: How long will seeds requiring heat or smoke remain viable? Fifty years? A hundred years? By suppressing fire, do we run the risk of obliterating these species in the long-unburned habitat?

Question number three: On the other hand, will the fire storms resulting from fuel buildup in fire-suppressed areas be of such intensity that every single seed, viable or not, will be destroyed?

Toads and Frogs of Coe

by Thom Parks

Many city folks think of frogs and toads in terms of "yuck." Slimy, dirty, unnecessary are the words that often come to mind. Carolus Linnaeus, the Swedish naturalist of the eighteenth century who gave us the classification system for plants and animals, wrote of the frog, "These foul and loathsome animals are . . . abhorrent because of their cold bodies, pale color, cartilaginous skeletons, filthy skin, fierce aspect, calculating eye, offensive smell, harsh voice, squalid habitation, and terrible venom." Linnaeus, full of fancy, would have us fear these harmless critters, which are an essential part of the wild.

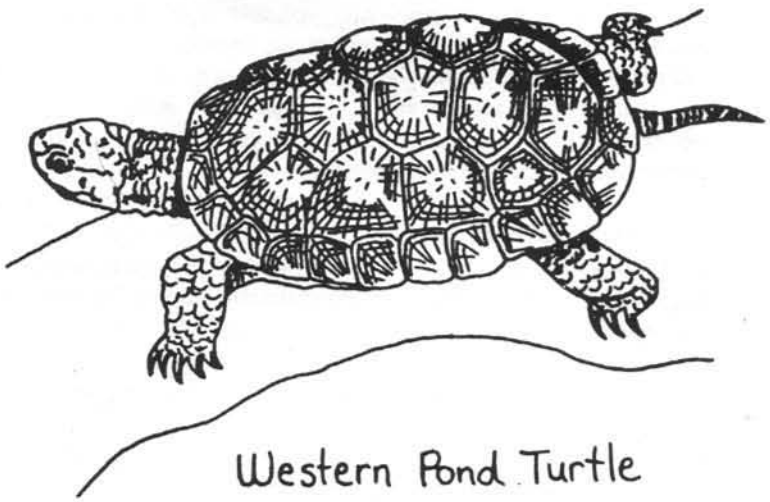
We who love the outdoors find frogs and toads fascinating members of the biota of Henry Coe State Park. Collectively known to biologists as *anurans,* frogs and toads provide food for predators as diverse as raccoons and snakes, and they consume large numbers of pesky flies, gnats, mosquitoes, and other insects. Almost anyone would prefer a toad in the garden to flies in the house! And while it is wise to wash thoroughly after handling any wild animal, even the mildly toxic skin secretions of the toads of the United States are of little danger, unless you try to eat one.

While there are no consistent biological differences between frogs and toads, most frogs in the United States have relatively smooth skin and most toads have skin with a warty appearance. No, handling toads will not give you warts, although handling frogs and toads will often give you urine, as a frightened anuran will often urinate to make itself more slippery and thus more likely to escape. Another way to tell the difference between a toad and frog is the length of their hops. By and large, toads can hop no farther than ten times their length. Frogs, on the other hand, can hop much farther with each spring, and are thus more difficult to catch.

In Coe we have only one reported toad, the Western Toad. This warty, rather slow-moving amphibian is often seen in sandy areas at night hunting bugs. Locals sometimes call these toads "Sand Toads" for that reason. Sometimes seen at the sides of creeks or ponds during mating season, a frightened Western Toad that hops into the water will generally bob right back to the surface.

The spring of some years will bring an abundance of toad eggs in slow moving creeks and ponds. Western Toad eggs can be recognized as the strings of clear pea-sized jelly with black centers, with about 10,000 to 15,000 eggs being laid by each successful female. Or so I've read, not wanting to count or to disturb so many tadpoles-to-be. Interestingly, in Venezuela, tadpoles are called "frog fish," a grand descriptive by any account.

When the tadpoles mature, growing legs and absorbing their tails, little toads about half an inch long invade the sides of the ponds and creeks, making it difficult for nature lovers to walk without great care. Indeed, densities of these little guys are often several per square foot during their brief periods of transformation, or *metamorphosis*.



Coe should also have Western Spadefoot toads, but none has been reliably reported, to my knowledge. Western Toads nearly always have a central stripe on their backs, lighter in color than the surrounding area. Western Spadefoots (don't you just want to call them Spadefeet?) have no stripe, but do have a black "spade" on each hind foot, about where a good anthropomorphic person would describe the toad's heel. Spadefoot Toads are in decline in California, due to habitat loss and perhaps also due to air and water pollution. If you see a Spadefoot Toad in the park, please report it to park headquarters, and do check to see if it, when handled, smells like roasted peanuts or makes you sneeze, as sometimes reported. Just be very gentle and remember to wash those hands.

While you may by now be at the edge of your seat wanting to know more about toads and frogs (or near sleep, vowing to take up birding), I'll keep this article somewhat short and will reveal more about frogs, both "true frogs" and tree frogs, in a future issue.

El Niños, Past and Present

by Phil Frame

Although El Niño's torrential rains last winter wreaked havoc throughout much of the country, a jaunt through Coe Park last spring revealed a brighter side, where park visitors are greeted by a glorious display of—new outcrops. Oh sure, the increased rainfall has produced a bumper crop of green grass and wildflowers, which do get in the way of all that dirt and rock we are all so interested in, but increased erosion of stream banks and new landslides have exposed fresh rock to begin the cycle of earth evolution once again.

Given enough time, a rock outcrop will succumb to the erosive forces of this hostile planet: rain, ice, and wind will wash, pry, and scrape at the surface; chemicals forming from water and plant or animal debris will dissolve minerals or the bonds that hold them together; and roots and even animals will wedge their way into small cracks and create footholds for themselves and then other living things.

The rock exposure becomes dirt, the dirt supports plant and animal life, the soil becomes thicker, and life prospers until some darned storm washes it all downstream, starting the process again.

With these thoughts lurking somewhere in the convolutions of my gray matter, I set off with my daughter for Jackrabbit Lake during the last Coe Backcountry Weekend. This is such a pretty little reservoir, surrounded to the north and east by an arcuate ridge and with splendid views of the Red Creek drainage, Paradise Flat, and the elusive Rooster comb to the west. Fish in this pond must be bored, since they readily bite on plastic that has been crudely shaped like lower life forms in the hopes of a little excitement on shore.

Unlike most of Coe, several nearly flat spots beckon the visitor for a comfortable night's rest on the low spur ridges that form the north, south, and east sides of Jackrabbit Lake. But why, I ask (myself, since I know my daughter has almost anything else on her mind), are these ridge tops so flat and so even? Could this be the result of ancient El Niños carving a flood plain like the flat at Orestimba Corrals, for example, that has since been eroded away leaving only drainage divides of similar height? Hmm.

If this were the case, one might expect to find rounded stream boulders of various types on the ground surface. Well, I could not find any. Still, that was not surprising since those darned grasses and wildflowers cover almost everything anyway.

A saunter to the end of the spillway does show a fairly good profile eroded through the dirt and into the rock below. The soil here is yellowish-brown with just a few inches of dark brown topsoil supporting a clinging mass of tangled roots. The contact between soil and rock is sharp and planar, as you might expect of a surface that was graded off by stream action. A typical soil/rock contact that developed from weathering, on the other hand, will usually be gradual and somewhat irregular. Unfortunately for the mega-El Niño theory, no rounded sand or gravel was to be found, and only after considerable squinting were a few slightly rounded-off grains identified. My head downcast in disillusionment, I found my eyes focusing on the present stream gravel—it's not very darned rounded either (owing, no doubt, to the short distance it has been washed downstream).

The trip was a great success, and we departed vowing to do it again, sooner next time, but the mystery of the origin of those surfaces lingered.

Now I just happened to be at the US Geological Survey Library in Menlo Park a few weeks later and figured a more distant view of Jackrabbit Lake might be what I needed. They have a collection of aerial photographs pretty much covering the entire state and have a series flown in 1971 showing the Orestimba area. These are black and white photos taken from a high-flying plane, so that the scale on the prints is about 1:30,000. This means 1 inch on the photo equals 30,000 inches on the ground or (dividing by 12) 2,500 feet or the distance between 2 drinks-of-water-while-resting-in-the-shade if you happened to be hiking there midday on July 4th when these photos were taken.

If you look at two overlapping photos with a Viewmaster-like device called a stereoscope, you can see a three-dimensional effect. The apparent relief is exaggerated, so slopes look steeper than they really are, but you can now justify taking as long as you did to cover your route. You can also see areas where you didn't venture. The area around Jackrabbit Lake does not look all that flat from this vantage point. Remnants of old flood plains can be identified bordering Orestimba Creek at the appropriately named Paradise Flat, at Mustang Flat, and elsewhere, but the even, low ridge tops near Jackrabbit are just too confined and too localized to be remnants of an ancient erosion surface.

So is this a case for Scully and Mulder on next season's "X Files"? Probably not. Lots of shale and sandstone can be seen in the creek bed on the hike to Jackrabbit Lake from Orestimba Creek, but the sheared rock seen in the spillway plus the nearby chert and blueschist blocks indicate the reservoir is located in a melange unit of the Franciscan bedrock. The shearing that characterizes this unit creates a terrain that often erodes more readily than the surrounding rock and so would result in an area of low relief. The next step for an inquisitive hiker would be to see what type of rock makes up the surrounding hills and whether that rock is more resistant than the melange at the lake. But that investigation will have to wait for another interesting hike to Coe's backcountry.

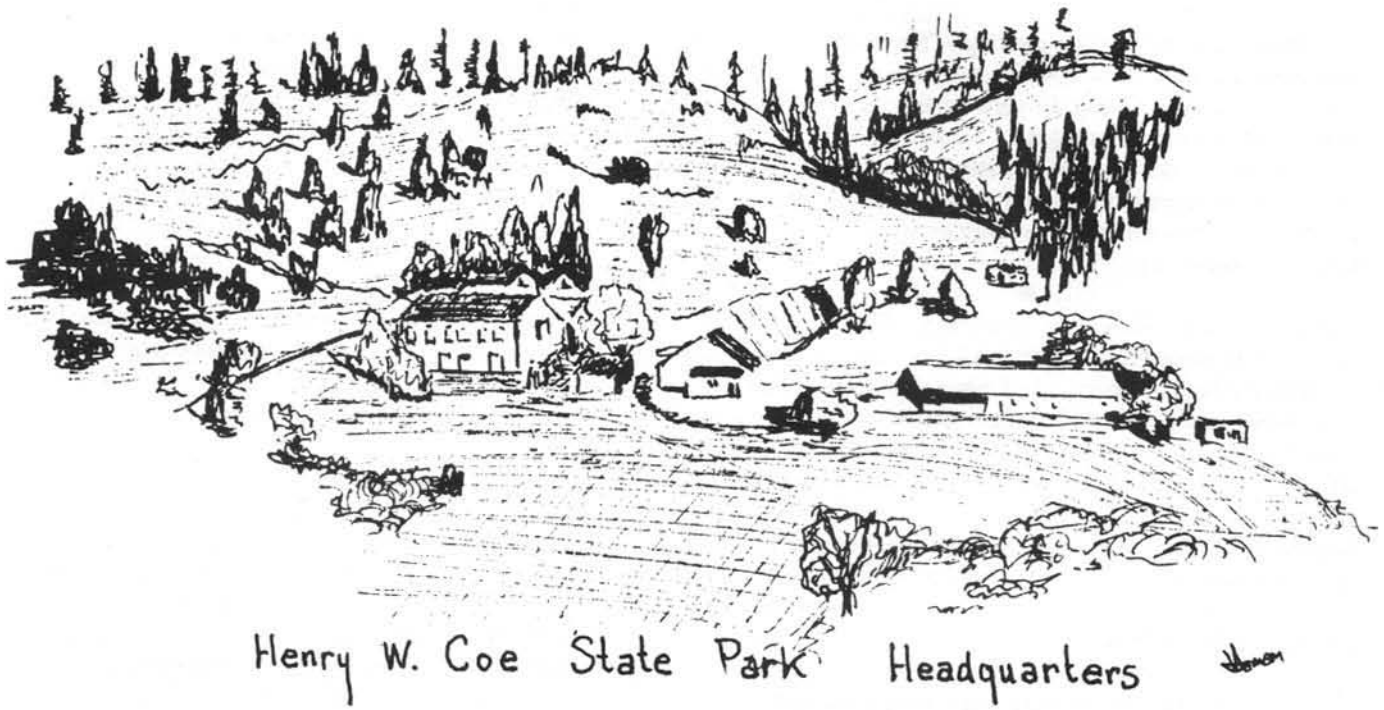
Keeney Cabin
by Teddy Goodrich

Poised above the creek that flows between Madrone Soda Springs and China Hole are the deserted remains of a small cabin. Years of neglect have taken their toll: the porch roof has collapsed, and most of the paint has gone from the once neatly painted exterior. Inside, much of the floor is missing, and cupboard doors hang open and empty. Today only mice and pack rats make their homes here, and it is hard to imagine another time when the tiny cabin overflowed with people.

On April 17, 1922, Henry Simas received a homestead patent on 193 acres northeast of Madrone Soda Springs. He, along with his son, Johnny, who was mentally disabled, built the original cabin. According to George Thomas, all the materials used in its construction were carried in by wheelbarrow from the road's end at Madrone Soda Springs.

Henry Simas owned an auto parts store in San Francisco, and that is probably how he became acquainted with Vernard Keeney, who owned a Dodge-Plymouth agency also in San Francisco. At some point, the cabin changed hands and became a retreat for the Keeney family for almost thirty years.

Vernard Keeney was born in Sweet Home, Oregon, on May 25, 1892. In 1920 he married Frances Riordon of San Francisco. They had two daughters, Patricia and Barbara.



The cabin, and the retreat from city life it provided, became a passion for Mr. Keeney. His daughter, Patricia, recalled "as little children, we went there every weekend." The family would drive down on Friday night or Saturday morning, or even sometimes on Sunday morning though always after stopping in Santa Clara to attend church.

There were only two rooms in the cabin, a kitchen and a bedroom. There were three double beds in the bedroom, very close together. The outside of the cabin was always kept neatly painted, white with green trim. An outhouse was across the creek and up the hill. "You had to have a purpose when you went up there!" An iron headboard formed a gate that led to the small patio, and a barber pole stood where the trail to the cabin met the trail to Madrone Soda Springs. Closer to China Hole was the well that served as their water source. Here Patricia's father rigged a shower, complete with burlap walls and a burlap door.

There was always a lot of company, especially during hunting season. "We'd have beds out in the front yard, sometimes as many as five metal frame camp beds." In the evenings after dinner, the family and their guests gathered outside to sing.

Vernard "kept track of everything in a journal, wood and food that was brought in, what they did to the cabin and how much it cost and the year they did it. The food, milk and bread, eggs, tomatoes, oranges and grapefruit juice, it was all listed and the cost was divided by the number of people there. Each family paid their share."

Vernard also did most of the cooking. "He was a fine chef on that wood and coal stove with the warming oven on top. He used to make biscuits and all sorts of things. He would fry steaks, and when they brought in a deer, the liver and bacon would be all we'd have. But mostly I remember him baking biscuits in the oven in that wood stove. I don't know how he judged the temperature, but they were always great. We didn't miss any meals."

The girls played. They went swimming. They caught frogs. An iron ring placed high up on the hill across from the porch was used for target practice. And when they were old enough, they went hunting with their father. The only culprit that detracted greatly from their enjoyment was poison oak. Patricia remarked, "If I didn't get poison oak that was a good year!"

Patricia's mother was the only family member who was not terribly fond of the cabin. "My mother didn't cope with the isolation for more than a weekend. When she went there, she always kept herself busy."

Patricia had no memory of snow while they were at the cabin, but she did remember rain. "We didn't go there too often when it was raining badly because the roads were so 'skiddy' and my mother was so panicky. The road was narrow, and the car did fishtail. Sometimes my mother would get out and walk in the mud, because driving just made her a nervous wreck. My mother really didn't enjoy the country, the animals and bugs and all that, but my father absolutely adored it."

"My father was always mending or repairing or doing something to make the cabin more comfortable so my mother would like it better. I don't know that she ever did."

While the Keeneys were enjoying their cabin, the Madrone Soda Springs Hotel was in its declining years. The road ended at the hotel, so the Keeneys parked their vehicle there. The only person living at the hotel was the caretaker (probably Lars Marken). Patricia and her friends played on the pavilion that straddled the stream next to the hotel.

On one particular visit, Vernard talked Patricia's husband, Lloyd, and her brother-in-law, Bob, into helping him carry a new cupboard into the cabin from their parking place at the Soda Springs. Apparently no one refused an order from Vernard; his sons-in-law called him "the general" behind his back. This cabinet was about seven feet wide and eight feet high. "It was just an enormous thing. And he wanted it so the cabin would have a nice storage place for my mother to store things in. So they brought it down from San Francisco in the truck, picked it up, carried it all the way into the cabin, up the stairs, got it into the kitchen, put it on the wall where he wanted it, and he opened the door and there were four tires inside of it! They all but killed him. He knew it all the time, and he never told them. Oh, he was going to make us a swing, and he was going to use one as a bumper, and one for this and so on. He knew they wouldn't have tolerated the tire bit, so he just didn't tell them."

One of Patricia's other memories was of artist Alex Stern, also from San Francisco, being lost somewhere in the hills. "Alex was lost in the hills for three days, and I don't know whether it was the Thomases or who—it might have been the game warden—came by and asked my dad if he was out would he look for this man. So I can remember my dad and his friend Dick Reynolds going out and looking for this fellow and finding him. They had to try to control him, he was so panicky and so glad to see somebody. He was terribly thirsty and couldn't drink enough water. He always said my father saved his life."

Patricia's father's declining health and the passage of the Coe Ranch to Santa Clara County brought an end to the family's cabin visits. There was no sadness, no regret, in Patricia's voice as she told me about her family and the time they spent at the cabin. "I have all good memories."

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

Park News

by Kay Robinson
Park Superintendent

I thought I'd start this article with a reintroduction of the park staff at Henry W. Coe State Park. Based out of the Gilroy office are four employees: two supervisors and two backcountry staff. Our Backcountry Ranger is Doug Meyers. Our Backcountry Park Maintenance Worker is Rick Perez, although his job has expanded to include more work at Headquarters since the maintenance position there is vacant. Ric Carpenter supervises the entire maintenance function at Coe, and I, as Park Superintendent, oversee all park operations. Holding down the fort at Coe Headquarters is Ranger Barry Breckling. Our newest employee is Phil Collett, a transfer from the Department of Fish and Game who recently filled the State Park Equipment Operator position and lives on the hilltop. Our very faithful and hardworking Park Aid staff consists of Lee Dittmann at Headquarters and Carolyn Fatooh Schimandle and John Prior, who share the visitor contact job at Hunting Hollow. Next time you're at the park, introduce yourself and let us know who you are. Your support of the park is very important to us.

There has been some trail activity in the southwest corner of the park. Thanks to a grant from the National Recreational Trails Act, we contracted with the California Conservation Corps to groom the newly rebuilt Jackson Trail. Its length is now about 1.7 miles, and the grade of the ascent is much less, offering a more pleasant route to Kelly Lake from Coyote Creek Entrance. With funds from the National Park Service, there is a new display case being installed at the trailhead of Anza Trail. Two panels will tell the story and the significance of Juan Bautista de Anza's trek from Mexico, bringing 288 settlers to Alta California in 1776.

If you have been up to the park recently, you may have noticed that Barry's new residence is operational (read that: he's finally moved in!) and the Ranch House is vacant. We have plans for the renovation of the ranch house this year providing that the much needed funds have not been cut from the Governor's budget. Rehabilitation will include a new foundation and roof, rewiring, and repair of the porch and west wall of the house. Already one of the bedrooms has been retrofitted as the Pine Ridge Association and Volunteer Office. The kitchen, bath, and west room will remain as functional elements for use by staff and volunteers. The main (front) room and back bedroom will be eventually returned to the period of the 1920s–1930s. They will reflect the ambience when the Coes and their ranch workers lived in the house. We have the blessing of the historian and ecologist through our procedure of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document. Now we just need the green light from the budget standpoint.

I hope you will take the time this fall to visit your park. The Fall TarantulaFest and Barbecue would be a great opportunity to bring the family.

Coe Park Garage Sale—A Great Success!

by Barb Gregory

The third annual Coe Park Garage Sale, held August 1st and 2nd in Morgan Hill, netted more than $3,200! Proceeds will go toward the expansion of the visitor center.

The organizers were Jim and Karen Mansel and my husband, Jim, and I. The donated items were stored at the ranch house and storage unit at the park. Many days and many hours were spent sorting and pricing and boxing the numerous items ahead of time. Special thanks go to Millicent Kellogg, Martie Sinclaire, Jane Tracy, and Roberta Wright for their guidance and hours upon hours of work.

Sheila Flodberg, Kitty Swindle, and Roberta Wright deserve a big thank you for the distribution of the advertising fliers. Roberta designed and obtained the fliers.

We also wish to recognize the assistance of Kitty Swindle and Judy and Barry Breckling for helping us load everything to transport to the sale site. Kitty donated the use of her truck and trailer. Chere Bargar was extremely helpful organizing setup, roving, and cleanup.

We also wish to thank the non-volunteers who so willingly worked so very hard to help make this a suceess: Ashley Simon, age 9, sorted, priced, and did numerous tasks. Roy and Shelly Simon sorted and set up. David Flack set up, helped guard from Friday through Sunday, and helped clean up. We are also extremely grateful for the care given us by the congregation of the Temple Emmanuel. Their gifts of food, drinks, and moral support were much appreciated.

We are grateful for the work of the cashiers Steve "Chalo" and Nancy Valencia, Marlene Testaguzza, and Jane Tracy; the drink organizers Larry and Aileen Edsinger; and the rovers

and general helpers John Briese, Azz Azzarello, Joan Smith, Loren Mansel, Martie Sinclaire, and Judy Breckling.

Thanks also to Dennis Pinion and Barbara Radd for taking the time to come by and pick up the day's receipts Saturday and Sunday.

Without the help of these people and all the donations of saleable items, we would not have had such a successful event.

Thanks to one and all!!

Time to Run for the PRA Board

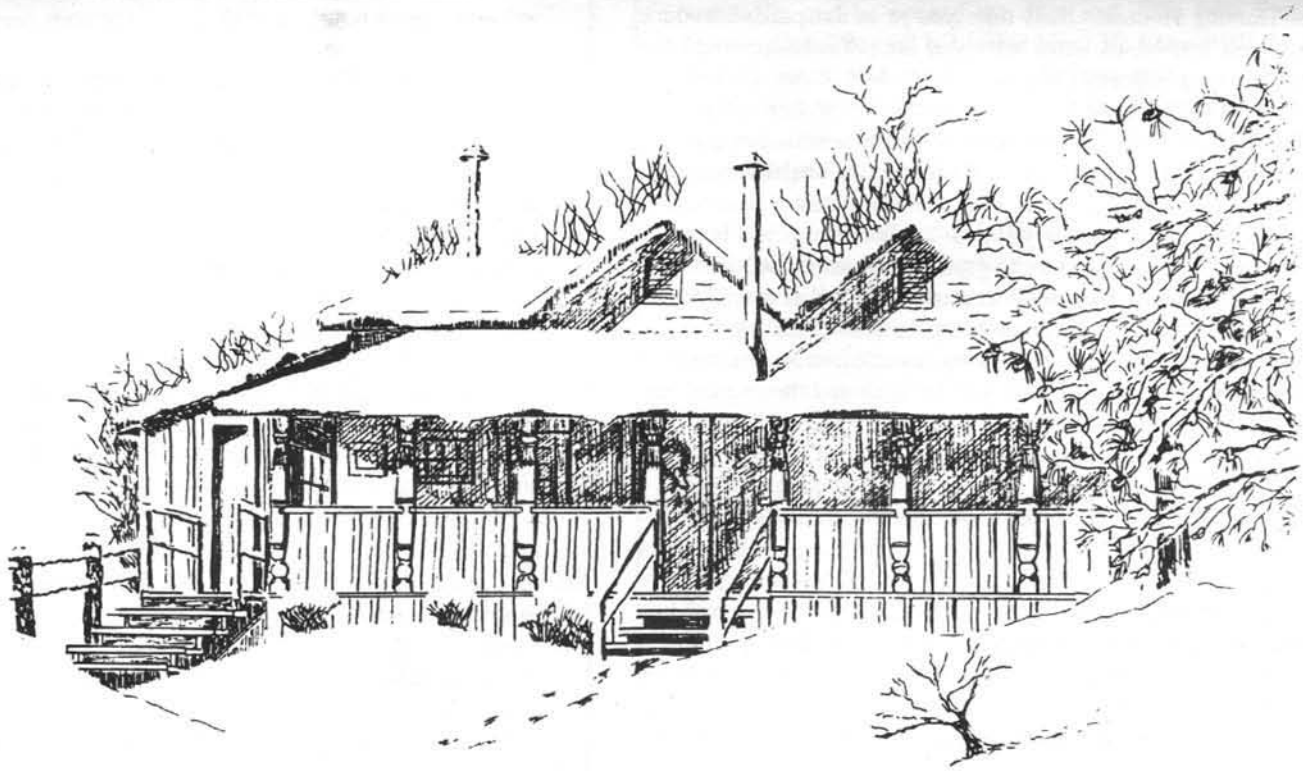
The Pine Ridge Association will hold its annual election for Board of Directors in December. The terms of three directors expire at the end of this year. Now is the time to prepare your candidacy statement and send it to the Board's Secretary, Winslow Briggs, 480 Hale St., Palo Alto 94301.

Any association member may run for the Board. A member may also nominate another PRA member. To do this, send Winslow a short statement explaining why you believe the person would be a good Board member, and he will contact your nominee to ask the person to consider running.

The most important qualification for a Board member is a willingness to attend Board meetings and to participate in carrying out tasks for the association. Meetings typically take place every other month on week nights. The term of office is three years. If a Board member is also a Coe Park volunteer, meetings and board-related activities count toward volunteer hours.

We use the special nonprofit bulk-rate mailing permit for sending out association-related materials. However, this means that some members may not receive their newsletters or other materials for several weeks after they are mailed. So that the ballots can be distributed (and received by all members) in a timely fashion, it is important that all candidacy statements be postmarked on or before **Friday, November 13.** Please send your statements to Winslow at the address above. (If you plan to nominate someone else, please do so at least two weeks earlier.) Your statement might be a few paragraphs long and might contain information like how long you have been a PRA member, why you became interested in Coe Park, ways that you have served the park or other volunteer activities in which you have benefited the public, any special qualifications or experience that you have, and specific plans that you have for improving the park as a Board member.

If you have any questions about what it would be like to be a Board member or if you would like additional guidance on putting together a candidacy statement, please call Winslow at 650/324-1455.



Membership & Contributions

by Lee Dittmann

The summer heat is here, and memories of the rainy year behind us fade. As temperatures rise, so do our membership rolls. We are pleased to welcome the new members listed below, who joined before August 30th. Thank you all for your support. Welcome to the Pine Ridge Association. The number of memberships now stands at 374.

Paul L. Airoldi, Oakland
Alexandria C. Bunten, Palo Alto
Tom & Phyllis Conrad, Morgan Hill
Paul Nielsen & Denise Gavello, Fremont
Kate Godfrey, Palo Alto
Jeff Hoffman, San Jose
Lyndal Hubbard, Menlo Park
Tami McNeill, San Jose
Laura & Steve Marlborough, Gilroy
Melvin & Gail Piestrup, Woodside
Connie Poloskey, Hollister
Ron & Shelda Reynolds, Gilroy
Patricia Scharfe, Morgan Hill
Shimokawa Family, Campbell
Diana Stewart, Los Gatos
Joyce Cain Taylor, Morgan Hill
Donald Tsusaki, Los Gatos

New contributors to the Visitor Center Expansion Fund

Lyndal Hubbard
Melvin & Gail Piestrup
Shimokawa Family

PRA Calendar

Friday, October 2, to Sunday, October 4: **October Weekend Backpack**. Join Irwin Koff and Janet Pettinotti as they lead a group to Lost Spring and then hike the Kelly Cabin Loop. Enter the park from the Coyote Creek Gate. Please call them (408/293-8194) for additional information and meeting times.

Saturday, October 3: **TarantulaFest and Barbecue**. Held at the Headquarters Campground from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; food served from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. There are a limited number of tickets, so order early; there will be no food tickets sold on the day of the event. A raffle will be held to benefit the Visitor Center Expansion Fund, with prizes that include paintings, pottery, and gifts from local merchants (see our web site, www.coepark.parks.ca.gov, for more details). For more information, please call the headquarters (408/779-2728).

Saturday, October 17 & Sunday, October 18: **Fall Barbed Wire Fest.** Help remove barbed wire from the park and have fun at the same time! Call Doug Meyers at the district office for more information (408/848-4006).

Saturday, November 7: **Trails Day**. Help us improve existing trails and build new trails in the park. Call Doug Meyers at the district office for more information (408/848-4006).

Saturday, November 28: Join us for **Thanksgiving** at Coe. (Note: This is on Saturday, not on Thanksgiving Day.) Bring a favorite dish to share with other friends of the park. Turkeys will be provided (smoked, grilled, baked, or cooked in some other manner according to a favorite recipe), although a small donation to cover the cost of the turkeys will be appreciated. Last year, over 50 people braved the cold and a rainy mist to enjoy a lovely (and warm) candlelight Thanksgiving dinner in the barn. Call the park headquarters to sign up or to obtain additional information (408/779-2728).

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http://www.coepark.parks.ca.gov

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Barbara Bessey
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Dennis Pinion
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Barbara Radd, Treasurer
Winslow Briggs, Secretary
Kay Robinson, Park Superintendent

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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 at 127 Glenwood Avenue, Woodside, CA 94062; or call 650/851-7813.

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