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

The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

Summer 2000

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

Interview with a Tent Caterpillar

Ranger: Well, hello there, Caterpillar. Say, I wonder if you'd mind taking a few minutes to answer some questions. People here in the park have been asking me about you and your friends, and I'd like to be able to tell them more about you.

Caterpillar: No problem.

Ranger: First of all, I've been a little confused as to who you guys really are. I've heard that you're tent caterpillars, but I haven't seen any tents in the trees.

Caterpillar: Well, I *am* a tent caterpillar, a Pacific tent caterpillar to be precise, but unlike the other five species of tent caterpillars in North America who build big silky tents in the forks of tree branches, we just build small tents, and we don't build them very often. That's why I like my other name better, *Malacosoma constrictum.*

Ranger: Sounds Greek to me.

Caterpillar: Actually, it is. Malaco comes from the Greek language and means soft, and soma means body. Don't you think I have a wonderfully beautiful soft hairy body?

Ranger: Well maybe hairy, but I don't know about soft. You look pretty bristly to me.

Caterpillar: Well, O.K., Malacosoma may refer to the soft, hairy critter I'll turn into toward the end of May. At any rate, why don't you just call me TC.

Ranger: Fine with me. Well, TC, I guess you go through the typical metamorphic cycle. You know, first the egg, then the larva (which is where you are right now), then a pupa or cocoon, which hatches into an adult who lays the eggs. Is that right?

TC: Of course. I can tell that you made it through third grade. I started as an egg laid last summer on the branch of this blue oak tree. See that little bracelet of styrofoam-looking egg cases around that little twig over there? I was crammed into one of those egg cases with about four others on each side of me, and the whole circle of eggs contained over 50 of us. I actually hatched in that egg case by winter

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. . . and more!

recycled paper

and waited until it warmed up in late March to come out. Some of my friends enjoyed their warm dry homes and didn't come out until April. As I munched more and more leaves, I got fatter and fatter and finally had to shed my skin and replace it with a new one. I did that several times actually. Now, if you look over there, you'll see some of the cocoons that other tent caterpillars have turned into. I'll attach my tail into a crevice in this oak tree and I, too, will turn into one of those light-colored fuzzy little cocoons. And in late May, I'll hatch into a soft, furry...

Ranger: ...beautiful, bright-colored butterfly, I bet!

TC: Wrong! You've read too many ugly duckling stories. I'll be a beautiful soft hairy *moth.* A bit plain for your taste probably. I haven't decided yet if I'll be a tan male with a couple darker lines across my wings or a larger reddish-brown female.

Ranger: A moth, huh? Well I'll be darned. Listen, one thing I *do* know about you tent caterpillars is that you do a lot of damage to the oak trees around here. Look at all these acres and acres of oaks with all their leaves stripped off!

TC: Hey, give us a break, will ya? Life's tough out here, and you don't know the whole story. Let me see if I can set you straight. First of all, *you* should talk about *us* doing damage? You humans do a much better job of that. We've lived with the blue oaks for thousands of years, and we don't go around killing them. All these oaks will leaf out again and probably before I even become a moth. And, my droppings are beneficial to the oaks. When oak leaves fall to the ground, it take years for the fungus and bacteria to break them down so the nutrients are available to the trees and other plants. We chew up the leaves, and our droppings will release their nutrients much more quickly. Most years we're not nearly as numerous as we are this year. We're always around, for sure, but some years there are so few of us, you have to look carefully before you can find us. But when conditions are good for a couple years, with mild springs and not too many of our predators and diseases around, we can multiply like mad and build up to a large population. That's when you see what you call damage. Most years we eat our favorite food, the blue oak leaves, but when it gets this crowded and we've eaten all the leaves off the blue oaks, we have to drop down and crawl up black oaks, valley oaks, or coast live oaks to eat. Some of my friends have even been eating madrones, manzanitas, and other trees and shrubs this year because they ate up all the oak leaves they could find.

Ranger: Hmmm. I didn't realize life was hard for you.

TC: Hard? *Hard?* You don't know from hard. As soon as we hatch into beautiful caterpillars (our bluish gray sides accented with straw-colored tufts of long hairs, our tops with bluebird bright blue interspersed with vivid apricot orange tufts of hairs, and a few long black guard hairs thrown in for contrast), we become food for everyone! The birds find our bright bodies easily. Many just gobble us right down, and others spit us out because they don't like our bristly bodies, but the real insult is when the jays get hold of us. They torture us by rubbing most of our bristles off on tree limbs or rocks before they eat us. And the jays will even eat us out of our cocoons! The nerve! By the way, did you notice how we were all wiggling real quickly when you came by? You might have thought that we were doing a beautiful dance. Actually we were trying to keep Tachinid flies from laying eggs on us. If they can, they lay them behind our heads where we can't chew them off. The eggs hatch and burrow into us and eat us after we become cocoons.

Ranger: Yuck, sounds like a grade B horror flick. Are there any other critters who are out to get you?

TC: Oh yeah, lots of things. Besides the Tachinid flies, one of which is called the Caterpillar Destroyer, by the way, there are those dreaded ground beetles, and one of them is called the Caterpillar Hunter. Those guys don't play fair. They're *called* ground beetles, but some of them climb trees to find us and eat us. Even their larva like to eat caterpillars. And there are wasps that lay eggs inside of us if they get the chance. The eggs hatch and eat us alive from the inside out! And if that's not enough, when we get this populated, we have to watch out for the devastating nucleopolyhedrosis virus!

Ranger: Nucleo-what?

TC: It's a virus that attacks insects, and it's very deadly.

Ranger: Wow, I guess you guys have plenty to worry about.

TC: And that's not even all! As we settle down on a tree and munch on tasty, tender oak leaves, the tree starts producing chemicals that taste bad. The trees also produce chemicals that upset our stomachs, and those chemicals keep us from being able to digest protein so we can't grow and develop. And that's still not all! The chemicals that the trees produce go through the air to other trees and warn them that we're coming, and then those trees start producing bad tasting and stomach upsetting stuff. And if that's not enough, some of those chemicals tell wasps that we're eating the trees, and the wasps come find us and lay their eggs in us!

Ranger: Well, I'm really sorry I was giving you a hard time. Your life is really difficult, and you do feed birds and other

insects, if you don't mind me saying it that way, and you do provide nutrients for the plants, and I bet there are other good things you do, too.

TC: As a matter of fact, I think there is another thing we do that you might appreciate. We give joy and delight to lots of kids who appreciate us for being beautiful and gentle. Unlike you big people, they don't make judgments about us. They like us just the way we are.

Mike Mahoney
by Teddy Goodrich

"Poverty would gentle a hog."

Many people still remember Mike Mahoney, and they each remember him as a kind man with many friends. He was a good neighbor; a "raw-boned Irishman, rough as they come, but with a big heart." In any conversation about Mike, the word "generous" is spoken time and time again.

Mike was born in County Cork, Ireland, in 1863. When he was four years old, his family immigrated to the United States and settled in Pajaro near Watsonville. His parents, Patrick and Bridget Mahoney, were farmers. Four of his brothers, Patrick, William, Daniel, and George, were older than he; two brothers, John and Timothy, and a sister, Ellen, were younger.

One of his favorite sayings, "poverty would gentle a hog," may have referred to a childhood of privation, as his father died when he was ten, leaving Bridget with eight children, the youngest only two years of age.

The family was afflicted with tuberculosis, and Mike may have been seeking a warmer, drier climate when he filed a preemption claim for four lots of section fourteen, township nine south, range four east. Over the next forty-eight years, Mike, his mother, his brothers, and his sister filed thirteen homestead claims on more than two thousand acres north and east of Gilroy Hot Springs. It is likely that he also purchased some odd-numbered sections from the railroad.

Mike maintained a home ranch, an apple orchard, in Aromas in Monterey county, but he spent as much time as possible on his ranch in the hills. He often rode horseback with a friend from Aromas to his ranch, a distance of more than forty miles. They would stop in Gilroy, tie their horses to the hitching rack on Sixth Street behind Gilroy City Hall, and have dinner at the Milias Hotel. Afterward they would ride on to the ranch. Sometimes he drove his buggy as far as Gilroy Hot Springs, then packed his horses with supplies and rode to his cabin. He kept his cattle here during the spring and summer, then drove them back to his ranch in Aromas in the fall. Cattle he had sold were driven to the train depot in Gilroy. George Thomas remembers helping Mike on these cattle drives. On the way back, they always stopped at the Hot Springs Hotel for dinner.

One of his trademarks was the sixty foot long reata, or lariat, he always carried. Using the end of the reata for encouragement, he rode his horses uphill and down as fast as they could go. When Mike dismounted, he simply dropped the reins to the ground; his horse would not move from that spot. One of his horses was named Speed; another big bay horse he called San Juan. San Juan must have held a very special place in Mike's heart. When he grew too old to be ridden, Mike turned him out to pasture. Soon Mike noticed San Juan was growing thinner and thinner, and while checking him over, discovered that his teeth were all worn down. San Juan was taken in for "horse dental work" and lived to the ripe old age of thirty two.

The four burner, cast iron restaurant stove that he kept in his cabin is often mentioned by those who spent time there with Mike. Years before, Mike had brought the stove as far as Gilroy Hot Springs, and there it stayed, as there was no easy way to bring it up to his ranch. One day a group of drunken cowboys presented themselves at Mike's door with his stove atop a sled. They had dragged it up the hills; sometimes the stove was on the sled, sometimes the sled rode atop the stove, but it arrived all in one piece.

Mike liked to have his visitors bring him fresh meat—perhaps two dollar's worth of beef, or a dollar's worth of mutton. Then he would cook up a big stew for his guests, putting in all the vegetables he had on hand: onions, peppers, potatoes, carrots. He also baked up a big bread pudding that included peaches or pears for dessert.

Deer hunters often found their way to his cabin. He didn't allow hunting, but he would tell them they could stay and hunt "just this once." The hunters often left something behind, perhaps their camera or binoculars. Mike had a special shelf just inside his cabin door where he kept whatever they had left. The same hunters would show up a week later, asking for what they had "forgotten" and hoping to be allowed to hunt again "just this once."

At his home in Aromas, he kept an old trunk. Thinking Mike was a wealthy man, people would often come to him, asking for money. They would bring him an old watch or something else to leave as security. Mike put those things in the trunk. They weren't worth the money he gave them, but Mike knew that during those depression years a lot of people were really hard up.

Because fences were few, cattle belonging to the various ranchers in the area grazed together. At round-up time, Mike was always there, helping to bring in the cattle and separate them by owner.

Mike never married. Late in life he employed a young cowboy, Tommy Elgrem, whom he treated as if he was his own son. One fall day in 1930, Tommy set out with another of Mike's cowboys, Joe Cruz, to round up cattle. Tommy's horse "hoolahaned"—went over backwards—pinning Tommy to the ground. Mike and Joe managed to get him out from under his horse, and thinking his only injury was a broken leg, attempted to carry him out on horseback. Tommy died of internal injuries before they reached Gilroy Hot Springs. It seems as though Tommy's death was a turning point in Mike's life, and he came to his ranch less and less.

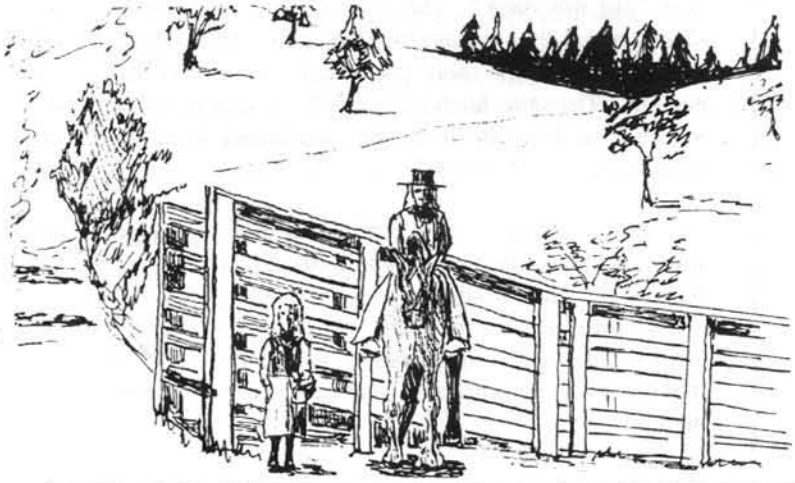
Mike never learned to drive; a friend always drove him when he wanted to go somewhere. He often visited a Catholic convent in Salinas that he helped to support financially. In February 1939, he stopped at the convent and gave a particularly generous check to the sisters, then continued on with his friend toward Santa Cruz. Without warning Mike slumped in his seat and was gone.

His only heir, a nephew, sold all of Mike's possessions. He sold Mike's cattle ranch to Henry Coe.

I am indebted to the following for their fond memories of Mike Mahoney:

Barney Ferranti
Merle Gomes
Jack Kirby
Keith Soward
George Thomas

Also the taped memories of Stanley Phillips, who was interviewed at Mike's cabin in September 1977, and *Reminiscences of the San Antonio Valley* by Frank Baker, managing editor of the *San Jose Mercury Herald* in the 1920s.



The Ponderosa Trail

by Winslow Briggs

It isn't often possible to write a trail description before the trail exists, but occasionally the opportunity—and the temptation—arises. An earlier description of the Frog Lake Trail was written while the trail was little more than a line of stakes that roughly defined the route, each stake surmounted by yellow flagging tape. The Ponderosa Trail presents the second such opportunity, and the author simply can't resist the temptation. The gleam in Lee Dittmann's eyes when he conceived the Ponderosa Trail and began to explore Pine Ridge for a feasible route has given way to a line of flagged stakes courtesy of Everett Allen. A California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document has already been filed, an archeological survey has been completed, and trail construction might conceivably begin this year.

An extremely popular loop north from headquarters is the Flat Frog Loop. The views are wonderful, and visitors can gain a sense of what this vast park is all about without the strenuous hiking that so many of Coe's trails require. One can start from the Visitor Center, climb about 400 feet on the Monument Trail, and descend Hobbs Road 600 feet to the Little Fork of Coyote Creek and the junction with the Flat Frog Trail. The return to the Visitor Center is then via the Flat Frog and Corral Trails, a gradual and extended climb of only 200 feet. The total distance is just a little over 4.2 miles. If visitors choose to take in Frog Lake as part their tour, the sign marking the start of the Frog Lake Trail beckons them to the right just across the Little Fork. Traversing a blue oak-studded slope and then climbing up through a rocky and mossy canyon, this out-and-back side trip adds only about 0.4 easy miles to the trip.

The clockwise direction just described is normally what volunteers and park staff recommend to visitors, as it gets all of the relatively steep climbing over right at the start. The return from the Little Fork is downright benign, a wonderful stroll through some very wild and beautiful country. The Flat Frog Trail is really almost flat (the trail, not the frog), and the Corral Trail back to the Visitor Center is hardly a challenging climb.

There is, however, a problem with the loop: Hobbs Road was not designed with hikers or bicyclists in mind. Although not hazardous for a four-wheel-drive vehicle, the descent to the Little Fork is not kind to other travelers. It is very steep and liberally provided with loose gravel, a combination that both jars hikers' knees and intimidates the inexperienced. It is also more than a bit marginal for inexperienced bicyclists as well. Both need to exercise great caution. Under these circum-

stances, it is unfortunately pretty hard for one to appreciate the special surroundings ahead and on either side.

For at least twenty years, various volunteers and park staff have discussed and contemplated locating a more civilized route from the summit of Pine Ridge to the Little Fork. Extending the short existing Ponderosa Trail that presently leads from the Henry W. Coe monument to Eric's Bench seemed a perfect solution. From Eric's Bench, one could head north along the open crest of Pine Ridge, maintaining the spectacular view to the west for several hundred yards. One could then descend by a series of switchbacks to the Little Fork, with the grade never exceeding about 10 percent (a drop of ten feet for every hundred feel of trail). The contrast between Hobbs Road and this alternative would be both physically and aesthetically dramatic. We'll describe both the existing and flagged route with the hope that soon there will be a real trail for the entire distance.

The existing stretch of the Ponderosa Trail starts at the Coe Monument and heads generally west past a fallen giant of a ponderosa pine, its uprooted base and smashed crown each surrounded by groves of healthy young ponderosas. These are almost certainly the giant's offspring. Those pines around the base are older than those around the crown and no doubt came from seeds dropped while the tree was still standing. The smaller saplings around the crown must have started from seeds shed only after the tree met its fate in a strong windstorm.

From the downed tree, the trail drops through open ponderosa forest past rock outcroppings on the right, and after a tenth of a mile, crosses the Monument Trail. Beyond this signed four-corner junction it continues westward climbing gently along the broad crest of a rounded ridge through scattered blue oaks and ponderosa pines. Young pines abound, clearly another nursery to rejuvenate the forest and replace the several aging and infirm seniors. Watch for another fallen giant on your left. After about 150 yards, the terrain becomes more open, and Santa Clara Valley spreads out before you. The trail gradually levels and veers right to follow the ridge crest. Ponderosa pines to the right contrast with the open grassland to the left, and after another hundred yards or so, the trail leads you to a trail junction and Eric's Bench. Placed under two ponderosa pines, the bench is inscribed "In memory of Eric David May from his Family and Friends." Eric was killed in a climbing accident on Mt. Shasta at the age of 26 in 1988. His love of Coe Park inspired family and friends to donate and inscribe the bench. *(Eds.: Libby Vincent has written a very moving essay about the creation of Eric's Bench, which appears on the Coe Park web site.)*

In the foreground are more scattered ponderosa pines. Cordoza and Pallisou Ridges stand out to the south, with conical Mariposa Peak and its many tall companions south of Highway 152 visible in the far distance to the left and the Santa Clara Valley to the right. You are allowed to stop and take in this breathtaking panorama for as long as you like. (It is equally breathtaking under a bright moon with the lights of the valley glowing below.)

Just before Eric's Bench, the Valley View Trail takes off straight ahead, and the Ponderosa Trail makes a sharp turn to the right. Beyond the turn, the Ponderosa Trail does something rarely found in Coe Park: it stays almost perfectly level for almost half a mile. In holding its elevation constant, it slips to the east side of the broad ridge crest. Around the very first shoulder you can spot Blue Ridge looming in the distance through a broad opening between the trees, with Middle Ridge below it. This section of the Ponderosa Trail provides further justification for naming it after Coe Park's most majestic conifer. It takes you through a truly wonderful pine forest, sometimes open and sometimes more closed and intimate, but all of it enchanting. Where the forest is denser there are seedlings, saplings, young adult trees, and grizzly giants. This forest is obviously healthy and maintaining itself. Look carefully around you. In places the only trees to be seen are these lovely pines.

Blue wildrye (*Elymus glaucus*), a native grass severely threatened by grazing in California's grasslands, is making a spectacular comeback here as elsewhere in the park. Watch for its tall, bluish shoulder-high unbranched seed stalks. Still staying level and in the shade, the trail rounds one large basin and then another smaller one before dropping down through the pines to a junction with the Valley View Trail.

Digression—The Valley View Trail. Beyond Eric's Bench, the Valley View Trail passes almost immediately to the left of a truly giant blue oak, its crown far broader than tall. The trunk is near sixteen feet in circumference, making it possibly the largest of this species in the park. A scattering of ponderosas tops the gently undulating terrain, their feet planted firmly in the meadows of the ridge.

The trail passes what was at the time of writing a somewhat tipped picnic table strategically placed to take advantage of the view and heads directly into a small grove of Pine Ridge's majestic signature pines. It bears gently to the right once again out in the open and generally follows the brow of the ridge just west of its crest. Soaking in the spectacular valley views off to the west can slow your progress considerably. The trail holds its altitude around a shallow grassy basin, stay-

ing in the open meadows for about 150 yards, and then makes a slight climb heading for another ponderosa grove. It gradually approaches a fence line coming up from the left, marking the park boundary and soon thereafter enters into the shade of the grove. Blue wildrye seed stalks again tower over all of the other grasses. Watch for some wonderful granary trees, with hundreds or perhaps even thousands of holes drilled to provide a granary of food for industrious acorn woodpeckers. With some holes empty and others with a resident acorn, these trees are clearly in the business of serving a present and active generation of these remarkable birds. Your route now swings to the right and drops down to the junction with the Ponderosa Trail just before the saddle.

The Ponderosa Trail drops into the saddle past an exploded black oak, crosses the saddle, and immediately enters a youngish pine grove, its deep green accentuated by a backdrop of blue oaks above and behind it. As the trail leaves the saddle, a small steep valley drops off to the left. The slope you are crossing becomes steeper as the valley drops ever deeper into the forested reaches below. Here are more magnificent ponderosa pines. Several of them, both dead and alive, show evidence that here, too, have been acorn woodpeckers. As you approach the fence line once again, watch through the trees straight ahead for a glimpse of the dome of the Lick Observatory atop Mt. Hamilton far to the north. The trail remains almost level, and the views to the north get better and better. You finally begin a 10 percent downgrade as the fence line drops off to the left and vanishes from sight.

The first manzanita appears below you, and there is evidence of a major fire sometime in the recent past. Charred stumps and dead and fallen trees form mute reminders that our forests are less than eternal and present a sharp contrast to the beauty of groves and meadows through which you recently passed. Along this stretch is a fine view of Blue Ridge over Middle Ridge in the foreground. The fairly open slope soon becomes more forested, and the forest changes in character, with increasing numbers of oaks, considerably fewer pines, and fewer areas of open grassland. As you round the end of the ridge to your right, the dramatic drop to the left allows a stunning view back toward Mt. Hamilton and the observatory domes to the north. Watch for another black oak with its dark green shiny leaves.

In a few yards your route takes you close to the trunk of an impressive canyon live oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*), the backs of the leaves covered with fine brownish-golden fuzz. There are still some ponderosa pines, but they are not so robust as before, undoubtedly the consequence of being out-competed by the shading oaks. Here are more charred trunks, reminders of the fire, and a huge black oak to the left. After a few hundred yards and the first of many scattered gray pine seedlings, the trail makes its first switchback, back to the left. The reason for the switchback is obvious: the slope ahead is now dangerously steep. Indeed, beyond the switchback, the slope just a few yards below the trail drops off every bit as steeply. (The author once wandered out onto this slope, having missed the flagging indicating a switchback, and a small attack of acrophobia forced a hasty retreat.) The forest here is even tighter than that you have just come through, the trees smaller, and the species mixture much richer. Here, in contrast to the top of the ridge, the pines no longer dominate. Instead, most of them are relegated to a minor role in the understory, while broad-leaved species dominate the canopy. In the springtime the shaded slopes here form a superb wild garden of ground iris (*Iris macrosiphon*), typical of many north-facing slopes in this part of Coe Park.

After about 150 yards, a small gap in the forest suddenly provides a window to the northeast, opening up a vista of Middle Ridge, Blue Ridge, and several other ridges far outside the park. You have now descended enough so that Middle Ridge actually forms part of the horizon. The blue wildrye stalks here can be long enough to tickle your chin. The forest quickly closes in as the trail traverses left into a broad basin with a double-trunked bay tree and a canyon live oak marking its center, and just as rapidly out again to the right, only to head abruptly into a small canyon. The downgrade that has held at an even 10 percent lessens as the trail rounds another shoulder heavily shaded by madrone, manzanita, blue oak, and canyon live oak. Yet another basin and shoulder present both good news and bad news. The good news is another great view of Blue and Middle Ridges. The bad news is the first specimens of the noxious shrub known as poison oak.

As you descend, Middle Ridge looms continually higher, gradually obscuring the more distant Blue Ridge. Watch for Hobbs Road as it ascends Middle Ridge near Frog Lake. Along this section of the trail, dead ponderosa pines have fallen every which way, and the trail builders will need at least one large chain saw to make their way through them. (Remember that the trail alignment is simply marked by stakes at present. Various animals make it a sport of knocking them down, with pigs the major suspects. Keep that in mind if you try to explore the line before the trail is built!) A second switchback just beyond the last shoulder leads you into a short run, probably little over a hundred yards, heading for switchback three. From an opening that provides some excellent views, the trail re-enters dense live forest shortly before the third switchback. Here are some large specimens of the scrub oak, *Quercus dumosa*, recognizable by its small leaves with multiple sharp points along their margins. The reason for changing directions so soon is obvious directly ahead: the

slope once again has become dangerously steep. The trail is actually going from one sloping bench to another, avoiding the steepest areas of this north-facing slope. It is possible that it follows the only feasible line for a trail that doesn't require (a) some major engineering and (b) major risks for the trail builders. Beyond the switchback you head back through a series of large ponderosa pine carcasses to an opening with a scattering of forest-rejuvenating miniature pines. Ahead and around another shoulder decorated with a number of madrones is a view through the woods into a broad basin perhaps a quarter of a mile away. This basin provides the headwaters of the Little Fork of Coyote Creek.

The fourth switchback occurs in a dreadful tangle of dead and dying manzanita, more fodder for the chain saw. There follows another very short run through more dense and tangled manzanita to the dangerously steep slope and switchback five. The forest becomes open with a mixture of black and blue oaks. Note that you can always distinguish a black oak from a blue or a valley oak, all three deciduous, in the winter and early spring. Black oak leaves are filled with tannins that strongly inhibit their decomposition. Hence the ground beneath black oaks is densely littered with large brown leaves. By contrast, blue and valley oak leaves decompose rapidly, so that by early spring there is hardly a trace of them. The trail immediately traverses yet another basin, passing just below a gnarled madrone tree and a brood of madrone saplings on the far side of it.

There follows a fairly long traverse across a flat slope leading to the sixth and final switchback in yet another basin inhabited by a fragrant grove of bay trees. The trail leads you back out of the basin and through some small gray pines. Although the side-hill slope that you cross here is not gentle, it is far less formidable than the one above you. Soon there are bay trees on all sides, releasing their characteristic fragrance. They and scattered ferns indicate that the ground water here is not far below the surface. The Little Fork is now visible only a few yards below and to the left, and you have almost finished your descent. Hobbs Road also becomes visible again, this time over a mass of poison oak (trail-builders beware). The route becomes more level, passes above a miniature forest of gray pines, and turns right into a steep lateral canyon. It almost immediately crosses the canyon and, just as abruptly, leaves it. In doing so, it traverses an outcrop of somewhat rotten rock, another interesting obstacle for the trail builders. Just beyond the rock formation, the trail ends on Hobbs Road. Ahead of you is a rectangular sign marking the end of the Flat Frog Trail. On the other side of the Little Fork is a similar sign marking the beginning of the Frog Lake Trail. Here again the blue wildrye is making a dramatic comeback.

With its gentle downgrades, the Ponderosa Trail is considerably longer that Hobbs Road between the monument and the Little Fork of Coyote Creek. Hobbs Road requires 0.9 miles to get you between the two places, whereas the Ponderosa Trail may require more than twice that distance. However, the author wagers that when the full Ponderosa Trail officially opens, bootprints on Hobbs Road will become a vanishing anachronism.

Blue Oak
Quercus douglasii

Valley Oak
Quercus lobata

Coast Live Oak
Quercus agrifolia

Coe ♫

by Barbara Bessey, PRA Chair

May was California State Parks Month. Governor Gray Davis used this opportunity to announce that the fees for state parks will be reduced substantially during this calendar year. The reductions will begin in the parks, museums, and historical sites starting July 1; additional fee reductions for the remaining recreation areas will be implemented in January. This means that the day-use fee will be reduced at the headquarters to $2 ($1 for seniors) and at Hunting Hollow to $1 (free for seniors). The rationale behind the fee reductions is to make parks more affordable for working families, groups, and associations. The reduced fees will make parks more affordable for shorter visits and picnics. Commensurate with the reduced fees, the California State Parks Annual Pass will be offered effective October 1 at the reduced price of $35 (from the current $75). More details about the rate reductions are available on the State Park website *parks.ca.gov.*

Because of increasing numbers of visitors throughout the year, we have extended our interpretive program schedule through the summer. We have discovery hikes starting out of our Hunting Hollow entrance and from the visitor center; we have interpretive programs at the visitor center on Saturday nights; and we have a few special programs and hikes starting from the visitor center. The evening programs include talks on mountain lions, the stories of the women who ranched and homesteaded in the area we now call Coe Park, and nature scenes of the four seasons of Coe Park. You might want to check out the Nature Corner Stories section of the Coe Park website: *coepark.parks.ca.gov/nc-archives.html.* Marlene Testaguzza, one of our uniformed volunteers, has displayed some of her photos and stories about wildlife in the park, including badgers, newts, toads, snakes, and ground squirrels.

I do hope that you will put the weekend of September 23–24 on your calendar. This is the 25th anniversary of the Pine Ridge Association, and we want to celebrate in style. There will be overnight camping, with dinner and breakfast. There will be hikes and interpretive activities; there will be presentations by PRA members, former park employees, and possibly by some neighbors and significant others; there will be historical displays showing the evolution of the PRA and of the park acquisitions; and there will be information on the proposed visitor center expansion. The critical question for you now is, do you know of the whereabouts of any former members of the association or former volunteers or close associates of the park in early years? If so, please let us know so that we can extend an invitation to them. An invitation will be sent to you in July, which will contain more details about the event. Hope to see you there!

A Rainy Day at Coe

by Mark Deger and Patty Woods

The date was February 5, the annual PRA meeting and graduation for the volunteer class of the new millennium. It was a rainy, wet day, but nonetheless a couple of the new grads decided to brave the elements and attempt a short hike in the park. After all, they surmised, "we are official volunteers now, and we really need to become more familiar with the trails so we can give out accurate information while on duty at the visitor center." Full of excitement and confidence at having completed their intense and vigorous training program and been issued their patches and name badges labeling them as "official volunteers," with a self-assured sense of satisfaction the pair headed out to Madrone Soda Springs via the Corral Trail to the Springs Trail onto the Manzanita Point Road.

The girl thought she threw her hiking boots in the back of the truck that morning. However, she not being a morning person by nature, the boots remained warm and dry in her garage. The boots she was wearing would have to do—Dick Bruhn was about to be put to the test. Naturally, it started to rain as soon as they hit the trail. Fortunately, a good umbrella and weather-resistant coat helped to shield the leather boots. The boy was prepared with his bike rain gear and proceeded to don his outfit and managed to express how he wished he had thought to bring his extra set of rain gear for her.

It was a beautiful afternoon at Coe, the clouds were moving, rain was falling, and there was a certain sense of peacefulness that only comes with a storm. If you've never experienced a stroll on a rainy day at the park—it is highly recommended.

"All I ask is that we make it back before dark. I'm not into hiking out here in pitch black."

"Oh, no problem," responded the boy, "We'll be back way before dark, don't worry."

In route, they passed a couple of fellow volunteers and seasoned backpackers, Irwin and Janet Koff, who were anxious to get to their destination to set up camp "before dark." They inquired as to the destination of the hikers, and Janet asked, "Do you have a flashlight?" The boy and girl replied confidently that they would not need one, since they would be back before dark. Irwin pointed out some sights of interest, and the two groups waved as they wished each other happy trails.

The Forest Trail was inundated with California newts, which they carefully avoided stepping on. The Soda Springs Canyon Creek was crossable by jumping from stone to stone. Once on the other side, the pair enjoyed leftover sandwiches compliments of the PRA luncheon while discussing the strong

possibility of getting caught out in the park after dark without a flashlight.

The scurry back across the creek proved to be uneventful—once, that is, the boy was instructed to offer a hand to the girl so her boots wouldn't get too wet.

The hike back up the trail was definitely a good workout and a little deceiving—once you thought to have the last hill behind you, just around the bend came another. They finally reached the top and the beginning of the Manzanita Point Road, which would lead back to headquarters. Along the way, they joked and made light of the fact that indeed they were not going to make it back before dark. They could see the headlines now: **2 Fresh Grads from Henry Coe's Renowned Volunteer Program Lost in the Park Overnight.**

Two large groups of wild pigs added excitement to the return trip. The girl was a little fearful. However, the boy hollered loudly at the pigs, and off they scurried in the opposite direction. He claimed that the pigs just needed to hear his alpha male voice to become intimidated enough to run off. Or something to that effect.

It became dark before they could see Sada's pine. Fortunately for them, Barry and Judy Breckling's Christmas tree (yes, a Christmas tree in February) served as their beacon and led them to the warmth and safety of their vehicle. Highly recommended—only start a little earlier if you are not into the dark thing, or take a flashlight or better yet an alpha male.

Park News

by Kay Robinson
Park Superintendent

It is with great honor that I announce the winners of the 1999 John B. Dewitt Award for Partnership in California State Parks:

Ann and Winslow Briggs

Each year nominations are made from within the ranks of the employees, volunteers, and partners of the Department of Parks and Recreation. This year I am proud to claim two of Coe State Park's own dedicated volunteers as the Dewitt Award recipients. John B. Dewitt was the Executive Director of the Save-the-Redwoods League and dedicated his life to the preservation of the land and environment of the coastal redwoods. This award is predicated upon honoring partnership between State Parks and its many supporters. Realizing that we "cannot do it alone," the Department presents this award to those who have served as irreplaceable partners in the accomplishment of our mission.

Ann and Winslow have certainly been friends, partners, and supporters not only to Coe but to many environmental organizations. To select just one focus of achievement was difficult. Their having been Pine Ridge Association members since the 1970s, advisory board members since the '80s, and part of the uniformed volunteer staff at Coe since the mid-1990s gave me much fodder to work with. I finally settled upon their contributions in the field of trail development. Among other activities, they singly and together wrote a grant proposal that resulted in one-quarter of a million dollars from the 1988 bond act, funds that created the Alquist, Rooster Comb, and Orestimba Creek Trails and rehabilitated the China Hole Trail; served on the Trail Advisory Committee since 1985; participated in the new sign program development; scouted many times over for appropriate routes for new trails such as Spike Jones, Anza, and Alquist; wrote "Trails of Henry W. Coe State Park" (recently released in its third edition); and flagged, constructed, maintained, signed, and mapped miles of existing trails.

The award goes on to cite their corollary achievements related to partnership with Coe: members of the PRA Board for many terms; uniformed volunteers; donation of over 54,000 hours of service (only started recording in 1996!); active participation on the Fundraising Committee for the Visitor Center; and spearheads for the now famous Coe Backcountry Weekend.

The awards were formally presented by Director Rusty Areias to all of the recipients at the Department's All-Employee Meeting in Sacramento in early June, followed by a reception in the Director's office suite. Along with hundreds in the audience, their daughter Lucia was also able to be present when they received the award. It was an honor to witness acknowledgment of their tremendous contributions to this park and to the environmental movement.

Next time you see Ann or Winslow at the park, in a meeting, hiking side hills looking for possible trail routes, digging holes for sign posts, or just relaxing on a bench taking in Coe's wonderful views, thank them for all they have done to make Coe a better place for the park's visitors. And while you are at it, thank yourselves for your contributions to that goal. Whether a volunteer, casual visitor, or Pine Ridge Association member, you all contribute to furthering the goal of making a better park for the future by respecting and honoring Henry W. Coe State Park.

August 12: Moonlight Daylight Burra Burra Hike Hike

by Lee Sims

The August moon and Coe Park—experience the pristine land and a mystical experience on Saturday, August 12, with the approach of the full moon.

We will hike without flashlights from the Dowdy Ranch buildings around Burra Burra Peak on Saturday night after dark. The total distance is less than three miles, the time about 90 minutes. We also will ascend Burra Burra, a quick side trip, and view most of the Hamilton Range, over to the Gabilan Range and beyond towards Big Sur, and also south beyond Pacheco Pass in the San Carlos range—spectacular under moonlight!

The following morning we will repeat the hike and observe the differences between night sounds and scenes and those in the daytime.

The Dowdy Ranch has a chemical toilet. For camping (which is recommended), bring your own food, drinking water, camping gear, and a chair. Stoves but not utensils will be available. Plan to arrive after 1 p.m. and no later than 8:30 p.m. on Saturday, August 12.

If you are afraid of your shadow, you might not want to come. The moon is so bright, you will see your own shadow; the mood is so dramatic, you will feel the shadows of people who walked these same trails hundreds of years ago.

A wonderful summer evening in Coe Park. Call me at 650/726-7547 (home) for more information and to sign up.

An Invitation to Join the Uniformed Volunteer Program

Would you like to learn more about Henry W. Coe State Park—its fascinating history, interesting animals, beautiful wildflowers, singing birds? Would you like to share your knowledge with park visitors? Then consider joining approximately 140 others who donate some of their time to assist Coe Park visitors. Consider becoming a uniformed volunteer.

Uniformed volunteers add to the park visitor's knowledge, interest, enjoyment, and safety by assisting regular park employees through interpretation, operating the visitor center, patrolling the park trails, and carrying out special projects. Uniformed volunteers receive free admission to Coe Park and the other parks in the Four Rivers District and, more importantly, receive the satisfaction derived from doing a job well and providing a necessary service to the public and to the park. In addition, uniformed volunteers find that the initial training and the continuing workshops and classes on topics such as wildflowers, bird identification, tracking, and how to plan an interpretive program are of significant value.

There is a series of classes each fall for all new uniformed volunteers. Topics in the next classes include geology, geography, climate, ecosystems, plants, animals, humans in the park, history of the park, being a volunteer, dealing with the public, interpretive techniques, and first aid. The training will be held at the park on ten weekend days from September 12, 2000, through January 2001. Some of the training will occur during hikes and a campout in the park. Graduation will be held during the annual meeting of the PRA on February 3, 2001.

Applications are available now. August 12 is the deadline for receipt of applications. Applicants will receive a telephone call to set up a short interview, which will be on August 17, 19, or 20 at park headquarters. If you have any questions or if you would like to obtain an application, call the park at 408/779-2728, or visit our web site at *coepark.parks.ca.gov*.

Membership & Contributions through June 9

by Deborah Vajretti

We are pleased to welcome the **new members** listed below. Thank you for your support, and welcome to the Pine Ridge Association!

Karin Ajimal-Pousson, Gilroy
Duane and Shirley Asplund, Morgan Hill
Nancy Barlow, Salinas
Marie Bienkowski, Sunnyvale
Dennis Cashman, San Jose
Gary Chambers, Sunol
Jean Circiello, Oakland
James P. Citta, Cupertino
Paul H. Comeau, Morgan Hill
Jo-Ann Fairbanks, Campbell
J. "Boomer" Grace, San Luis Obispo
Neal and Mary Jane Grover, Gilroy
John W. Harbaugh, Stanford
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Kopit-Ketchum, Santa Cruz
Tony Leung, Livermore
Robert Mitre, San Jose
Fran and Jim Naylor, San Jose
Gale Rankin, Palo Alto
Richard Shalita, Morgan Hill
Mary Solari, Gilroy
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Daniel Straus, San Jose
Christopher Talbot, Emerald Hills
Linda Tarvin, Morgan Hill
Tracy Tyrfingson, Hollister
Colin Whitby-Stevens, Scotts Valley
Marilyn Winter, Portola Valley

Contributors to the Visitor Center Expansion Fund

Sally and Ed Burke, Santa Clara
James P. Citta, Cupertino
Becky and Mike Duret
Neal and Mary Jane Grover, Gilroy
Monte Jensen, Morgan Hill
Melvin and Gail Piestrup, Woodside
Marty Pflasterer, Morgan Hill
Patti and Ed White, Los Altos

PRA Calendar

Saturday and Sunday, August 5 and 6: **The 5th Annual Rummage Sale.** Proceeds support the expansion of the visitor center. See enclosed flyer for more details.

Saturday, August 12, & Sunday, August 13: **Moonlight Daylight Burra Burra Hike Hike.** Experience a hike without flashlights on Saturday night, with the approach of the full moon. See the article on page 10 for more details.

Saturday, August 12: **Deadline for applications to become a uniformed volunteer.** Join approximately 140 other individuals who are uniformed volunteers. What they all have in common is a love of Coe Park and an interest in sharing their knowledge with the public. See the article on page 10 for more details.

Friday, September 1, to Monday, September 4: **Labor Day Weekend Backpack Trip.** Join Irwin and Janet Koff to explore the beautiful area of Cañada de la Dormida. To sign up or to receive additional information about this strenuous trip, call them at 408/293-8194. You can also get information from our website at *www.coepark.parks.ca.gov/group-backpacking.html#ldtrip.*

Sunday, September 24: **Coe Homecoming 2000.** Help us celebrate the 25th anniversary of our association. Please call Lee Sims if you would like to help plan this event (650/726-7547).

Friday, September 29, to Sunday, October 1: **Fall Weekend Backpack Trip.** Join Irwin and Janet Koff to explore the area around Kelly Lake. To sign up or to receive additional information about this strenuous trip, call them at 408/293-8194. You can also get information from our website at *www.coepark.parks.ca.gov/group-backpacking.html#ldtrip.*

Saturday, October 7: **The Fourth Annual TarantulaFest and Barbecue.** Get an up close and personal look at a tarantula and, at the same time, help support the expansion of our Visitor Center! See the enclosed flyer (or check out our website at *www.coepark.parks.ca.gov/tfest.html*) for more details.

Saturday, November 4: **Trail Day at Coe Park.** Join other interested volunteers and help work on trails in the park. If you would like to see what a typical work day might look like, check out our website at *www.coepark.parks.ca.gov/trailwork.html.* If you are interested and would like more information or to sign up, please call Doug Meyers at the Coe Sector Office (408/848-4006).

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The Ponderosa is a publication of the Pine Ridge Association with approximately five issues per year. 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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