The **Ponderosa**

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

Fall 2003

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

Howls and Yips, Yelps and Wails

They were born in a dug-out hidden hole in a rock outcrop where a forest and field met. It had been early April, almost a year and a half ago. She'd always been the runt, and her brother was a little bit larger than average for a coyote. Their other two sisters and two brothers had scattered last fall, but these two had stuck together. It was now August, and in a few months they would split up and find mates. If you watched the two for a while, you would realize that she was timid and that he was not, but he had that air of wariness that all coyotes have.

They were hunting for mice and grasshoppers on a grassy slope in the late morning, and he stopped to sniff the air. Usually he sniffed the air for the scent of something good to eat, maybe the faintly sweet-sour citrus scent of ripe manzanita berries on the next ridge east, or the dank, musky smell of a decaying deer carcass a mountain lion had hidden in a pile of scraped-up grass and leaf litter, or the deeply earthy smell of a gopher hiding in its hole. Today it was something different. He sensed a change. His sister sniffed the air in imitation. She too could sense the change.

His attention was drawn back to the hillside by the scent of a mouse. He stalked forward hesitantly, eyes, nose, and ears all pointing toward a small hole in the ground. The dry coyote-colored grass swayed in the gentle breeze, camouflaging his smooth movements and careful steps. Suddenly, he leaped up and forward in an arcing pounce, and landed on a meadow mouse that had strayed a little too far from its hole. He made lunch of the mouse with a peanut-butter-on-your-tongue munching motion.

Nearby, his sister was sniffing at a large black tarantula. He'd learned last year to avoid the big spiders after one kicked hairs off its abdomen into his nose. The hairs had irritated him for a couple of hours. Wiping his forepaw across his nose and snorting as hard as he could brought no relief. His sister cautiously played with the tarantula, first tapping it with her paw, then nudging it with a her nose, but she seemed to know that the spider wouldn't be worth pursuing as a meal. She raised her head, cocked it a little to the left, and looked up at a small group of band-tailed pigeons flying overhead. They would make a fine meal, but they were always flying or perched high in trees and never seemed to spend any time on the ground like the plump, tasty quail she had caught earlier that summer.

Inside this issue . . .

A self-introduction by the Supervising Ranger for Coe

A short history of reorganizations involving Coe Park

Artwork inspired by—and created in—the park

Call for PRA award nominations and board candidates

. . . and more!

She trotted off into a ravine following her nose, but it seemed that something she had heard or seen was really drawing her on. She crept around a large poison oak bush that was already turning bright red and found two vultures working on a jackrabbit carcass. She quickly chased off the vultures and started to eat. Her brother came along, and she shared the meal with him. The mouse and the jackrabbit would be all they would find to eat this day.

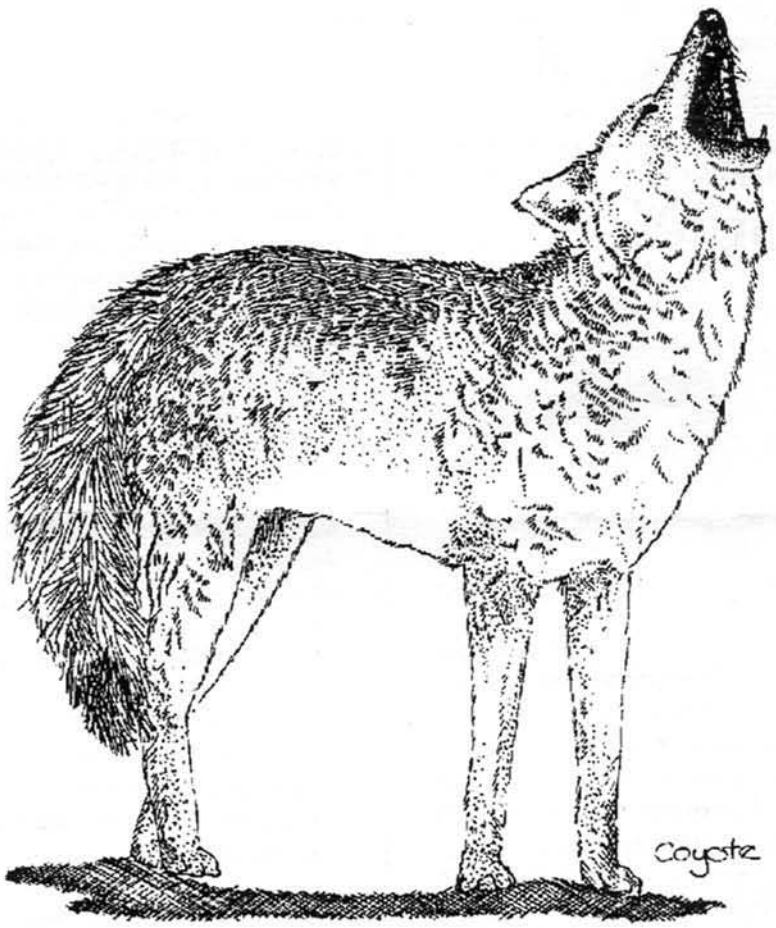
They watched the two vultures join a group of about ten others soaring above a windy knoll to the west. For the last week or so, the solitary vultures of spring had begun gathering in larger groups, soaring high in the sky.

The coyotes returned to the grassy hillside. He sat down and gnawed on a thistle splinter stuck between his toes, snorting a bit from the strong smelling vinegar weed and tarweed oils that had stuck to his legs. She lay down near him. With eyes half open, they watched spider webs blowing across the sky and pine nuts with their whirligig wings helicoptering leisurely to the west.

Brother and sister drowsed in the mellow softness of the evening light. Five bluebirds flew to the top branches of a gray pine nearby and settled in to watch the sunset. The coyotes had planned to nap until night and then resume their hunt for food, but as the sunlight faded, a strange feeling took hold of them and brought them to their feet. They raised their noses in unison to the south, then to the east, to the west, and back to the south.

During their morning hunt, they had sensed that summer was slowly giving way to fall, but what they sensed now was different.

She ran down to the base of some blue oak trees and began to howl. He took up the chorus on the hillside. In the past, they had often howled to tell others how the night's hunt had gone, and when they found one of their brothers and later one of their sisters dead, they had howled in high, long wails of sadness. During the coming winter, the yips and yelps and wails in falsetto harmony would have more to do with two coyotes meeting as mates or others refreshing vows made in previous years. Now, their howls were different. They were interspersed with lots of barking that ended with low yips meant only for each other's ears.



They ran around nervously between howls, and she occasionally hunched down and looked over her shoulder in apprehension. He nervously looked this way and that, as if a mountain lion were nearby. They didn't sit in one place as they did when they howled to enjoy their own music. They ran nervously here and there and back again. They had lived less than a year and a half, and something deep inside of them foretold of a new and awe-filled experience, one that their ancestors had known for centuries.

Darkness came early to the grassy slope as clouds thickened and blew toward the north. Brother and sister trotted three miles to the east, back into the forest close to where they were born. They found comfortable places to curl up in a brush patch below the forest. Winds began to blow, and off in the distance they could hear the muffled rumbles that were not in their memories but were held someplace deeper. Gradually the rumbles turned to crashes, and streaks of light split the darkness. For five hours off and on—more on than off—the lightning and thunder crashed near and then even nearer. Heavy rain fell and a little hail crashed around them as they shivered, more from fear than cold.

Before dawn, calm had returned, and they trotted off to inspect their territory. A little before sunrise, they found a dead pine tree on the ridge top with a slender column of smoke rising from its broken off top. Late that morning, the smolder in the tree top turned to flames at the base of the tree, and by early afternoon, fire was burning in the nearby grass. By nightfall, the fire had spread north and east into forest, woodland, brushland, and more grassland. The fire would burn hot and fast for a week and then here and there for a month, smoldering in pockets until late October rains extinguished it completely. They spent the fall going in and out of the burn area finding new things to eat. In late November they parted ways, and before the end of the year they each found a mate.

Three years later just before dawn on a late summer day, he heard a familiar howl from a ridge to the east. He trotted off in that direction stopping only to let out a howl and a few yips of his own. There on a grassy slope was his sister. They touched noses, and she lay down with her nose under her tail as he sat watching the sun come up. Seven bluebirds perched on top of a dead gray pine also paused to watch the sun rise. A large group of quail wandered out from under a patch of brush that had survived the fire of three years ago. They were busily eating seeds from the bountiful growth of annual plants that had thrived every year since the fire.

Green nourishing sprouts of brush were emerging in the burnt-over areas, and on the ridge tops where there had been no new pines for twelve years, there were many young pines all about three feet tall. A dozen vultures circled above, and a large flock of band-tailed pigeons flew into a nearby blue oak looking for early acorns.

Over the years, fire had burned through this country about every five to fifteen years, and there was rarely enough litter under the oaks to build a fire up into the crowns of the trees. Right after the last fire, there were fewer mice and grasshoppers, but by the next year the mice, grasshoppers, quail, bluebirds, band-tailed pigeons, spiders, vultures, and even coyotes were becoming numerous. The coyotes now had plenty of food and plenty of leisure time to howl and yip, yelp and wail, with an occasional bark or two.

Sister and brother relaxed together on the grassy slope on this late summer morning for a few hours. Then off in the distance they heard muffled rumbles. They got up and stretched, touched noses one more time, and trotted off in their own directions, each acting a bit nervous, but probably less from fear than from that air of wariness all coyotes have.

Park News

by Denise Reichenberg
Supervising Ranger

A lot has been going on here with Henry W. Coe SP lately. Many of you are aware that State Parks has been reorganizing. I am a new addition to Coe due to this reorganization. With the reorganization, Coe Park left the Four Rivers District and became part of the Monterey District. Monterey District is divided into sectors, and Coe is in the Gavilan Sector, which also includes Fremont Peak and San Juan Bautista State Parks.

Gavilan Sector already had a Superintendent named Curtis L. Price (CL as he likes to be called). CL is Kay Robinson's replacement, if you will. I work for CL. My name is Denise Reichenberg, and I am the new Supervising Ranger for the Gavilan Sector. My primary responsibility is with Henry W. Coe, but I do help out with Fremont Peak and San Juan Bautista, too. My role is kind of in between Superintendent and Ranger. I supervise the Coe Rangers, and I handle any of the work that Kay used to do that does not require the status of Superintendent. I am the new Cooperating Association Liaison for the Pine Ridge Association and will be attending their board meetings and helping the PRA and State Parks to accomplish their joint goals.

I started with State Parks in 1991 as a Volunteer while I was in school. I quickly became a Park Aid at Lake Oroville State Recreation Area. I was working there when I graduated from Butte Community College with degrees in Parks and Recreation and in Natural Resources. I did a few years as a Dispatch Clerk on the radio and then attended the Academy at the Mott Training Center in Asilomar. I graduated as a State Park Ranger and worked my first assignment at Chino Hills State Park. After two years at Chino, I transferred to Lake Oroville. After a while I became a Supervising Ranger and transferred back to the Mott Training Center where I spent the last three years training new Rangers and Lifeguards for field work.

I am very excited about Coe and all of the possibilities it holds. I love the outdoors, hiking, camping, a little cycling, and I used to do a lot of horseback riding during high school and for a few years after that. Coe holds a lot of opportunity for me to enjoy my outdoor passions. I look forward to seeing many of you in the park over the next few months. I'm still learning my way around, so it's not impossible you will catch me taking a wrong turn and asking *you* for directions (that hasn't happened for a few weeks).

Another recent change is that the Gilroy office has been closed as of September 15th. The entire staff of that office is now located in San Juan Bautista at the Gavilan Sector Office. We have some new contact numbers and a new address for you:

California State Parks, Gavilan Sector
P.O. Box 787 (for mail)
19 Franklin Street
San Juan Bautista, California 95045
831/623-1659

State Parks is going ahead with the new Coe office that will eventually be located at what is now referred to as the Stevenson Ranch. We get a little closer each day but do not know when that office will be ready for us to move in to. We will keep you posted.

In the last few months there have been a couple of notable events. Gilroy Hot Springs is now officially State Park Property. I have been out to tour the property, and it will need a lot of work before it can be opened to the public. The Nature Conservancy did a lot of work draining the tubs and pools. The outdoor pools have been filled with sand for now due to health and safety reasons. The dump has been cleaned up, and the trash hauled away. For now the property will be closed to the public until our experts can do an assessment for use of the area.

On August 5th a fire started near the Hartman Trail in the Orestimba Wilderness. The fire was started by a lightning strike a few days earlier that smoldered until the conditions were just right. This fire burned approximately 200 acres and was contained on August 8th. On August 25th we had another thunder and lightning storm that touched off two very small fires near Mount Sizer on August 26th. One fire was just about 25 feet in diameter, and the burned area can be seen from Blue Ridge Road. Lightning struck a tree there, and the tree is quite interesting to see now. Take a look if you are hiking in the area. The other fire was a couple acres, and the burnt area cannot be seen from the road. These fires were put out that same day very quickly.

The Volunteer Committee designed and initiated an excellent Uniformed Volunteer training course. Congratulations and thanks to all of the Volunteers and Staff who worked very hard to make this happen. I had hoped to be there but was unexpectedly pulled away. Ranger Barry Breckling filled me in, and it sounds like we have some great new Volunteers to welcome to the family. I look forward to meeting them at upcoming Volunteer Training. Our District Interpretive Specialist and District Volunteer Coordinator were both present at the training and were very impressed. Thanks again to all of you who made the Volunteer Program look so good.

Well, that's about all I can think of at this time. We're all looking forward to the Tarantula Festival next month, and hopefully I will see some of you there.

What Goes Around, Comes Around

by Barry Breckling

Over 30 years ago, I worked at Mount Diablo State Park as a park aid. It was there that I heard about a park called The Coe Ranch. It had become part of the Diablo Area Parks ten years earlier.

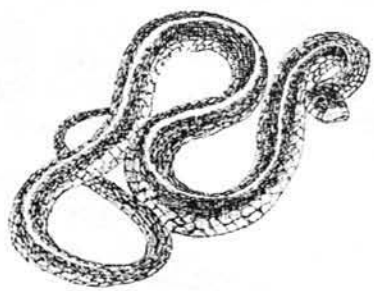
I got my first ranger job working at San Juan Bautista State Historic Park and Fremont Peak State Park, which were both then part of the Monterey Area Parks. I worked at those two parks for a little over a year, and then headed off to the Santa Cruz beach parks. As some of you have heard me say, beach parks were nice places to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there (though I did for six years).

In 1977, I learned that the one ranger position at The Coe Ranch, now Henry W. Coe State Park, was soon going to be vacant. I talked to the manager of the Gavilan Area, Ray Jenkins, and he got me the job at Coe Park. Back then, Coe was part of the Gavilan District, which included San Juan Bautista and Fremont Peak.

Several years later, in a reorganization, Coe Park became part of the Four Rivers District. (I used to tell them it should be called the Four Rivers and Three Creeks District after they added Coe.) The district included parks over in the San Joaquin Valley.

Well, what goes around, comes around. A few months ago, we joined up with San Juan Bautista and Fremont Peak in the Gavilan Sector (sound familiar?), and we became part of the Monterey District, and the District Superintendent is Phil Jenkins, Ray Jenkins's son.

Reorganizations are as inevitable as taxes, so don't be too surprised if Coe Park someday becomes part of a newly reorganized Mount Diablo District.



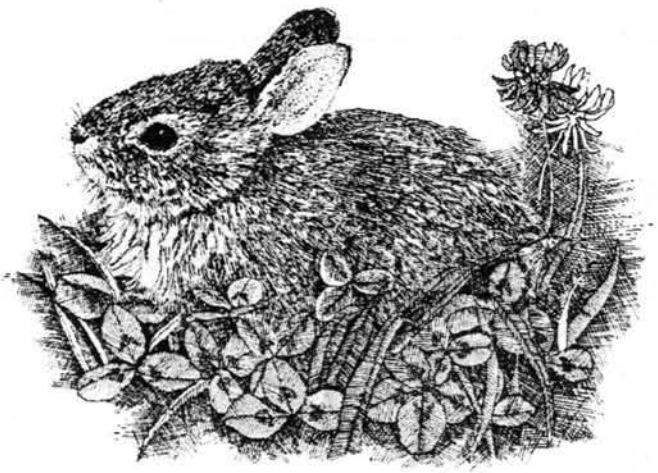
Coe-Inspired Artwork on Display

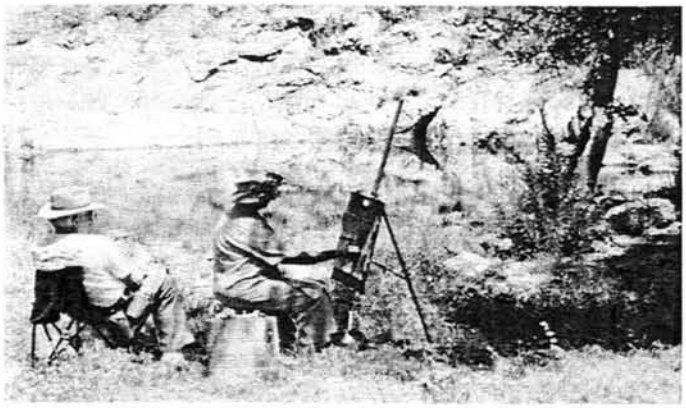
by Rosemary Rideout

The rainy weather of spring 2003 saw the cancellation of many of the park's spring programs in the Coe backcountry. Rain scuttled the much anticipated Backcountry Weekend as well as a number of other interpretive programs. First the original, then an alternate date for a wildflower photography workshop scheduled for the backcountry were washed out. Then, the first date for a plein-air (in the open air) paint-out by local artists of the Valle del Sur Art League was swept away. Nevertheless, in early June the Valle Del Sur artists regrouped on what turned out to be a gorgeous morning for the first of what is hoped to be an annual paint-out in the Coe backcountry. The artists painted and photographed the Pacheco Creek area, an area most recently threatened by inundation of waters from a possible dam project, one alternate which was at that time (but no longer, we've been assured) under consideration by the Santa Clara Valley Water District.

An exhibition of Henry W. Coe State Park inspired artwork, including some of the paintings and photographs created plein-air at the June 2003 paint-out, are on display at Gallery Morgan Hill from September 20th through October 13th.

The gallery cordially invites all who appreciate the beauty of Henry W. Coe State Park to the exhibition. Gallery Morgan Hill is located at 17490 Monterey Road, in the Downtown Mall, and their hours are Tuesday to Saturday 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., closed Mondays.





Bill Halopoff, Graphite Artist, and Judy King, Pastel Artist

Nominations Sought for the Annual PRA Award

Each year at the PRA annual meeting held on an early Saturday in February, an award is presented to someone whose efforts have preserved and enriched Henry W. Coe State Park. It is not necessary that the recipient be a member of the Pine Ridge Association or be a uniformed volunteer in the park. Occasionally the award has been given to two people who had worked closely together to benefit the park. The recipient receives an engraved plaque, and the person's name is added to the large plaque that is displayed at the visitor center.

Two unofficial sets of criteria for selecting the recipient from among the nominees have been proposed:

- Leadership: scope, motivation, and initiative
- Involvement: scope, altruism, and time contribution
- Asset growth: recruiting, fund-raising, and contributions
- Ideas/Projects: creative, innovative, follow-through with personal implementation
- Performance: past, sustained, future expectations
- Measurable accomplishments: visible results

- Has had a beneficial effect on the park's resources and activities
- Has sought out responsibility and has acted as a leader
- Has leveraged efforts into multiplicative effects by organizing the activities of others

We are asking PRA members to supply nominations for this award by the beginning of November. If there is someone you would like to nominate, please write a short paragraph of reasons why that person should be considered and send it to the PRA Secretary, Winslow Briggs, 480 Hale St., Palo Alto 94301 or Briggs@Andrew2.Stanford.edu. A committee of the PRA board of directors will collect additional information about the activities of your nominee and will make a selection.

Coe ♬

by Barbara Bessey, President, PRA

Although the long days of summer are gradually shortening into fall, you can still find some exciting activities at Coe Park. The Fall TarantulaFest and BBQ (October 4) offers an up close and personal look at our tarantula friends (for those who so choose) as well as walks, good music, and good eats (food tickets must be purchased in advance). There are also several more hikes and evening programs on some Saturdays in September at the park. And don't forget our PRA Coe Thanksgiving Saturday. Bring a potluck dish to share, join us at the park, and enjoy meeting other people who love the park. You might see a beautiful sunset or mist or rain, but a good time will be had by all regardless of the weather.

We are hearing more now about the high-speed rail system being proposed that could impact as many as 23 California state parks. As we get more information about the proposed routes, we will share it with you.

This is your organization. Get involved in something that interests you. Let me know if there is something you would like to participate in but you haven't yet seen an opportunity to do so. You can e-mail me any comments or suggestions (bbessey@air.org).

See you at the park!

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 two 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 a few 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 14.** 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 such as 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 Board President Barbara Bessey at 650/851-7813.

Coe Park and Pine Ridge Association Change of Address

Coe Park hasn't moved, but we'll now be getting our mail at a mail box on East Dunne Avenue, and we won't have to go all the way to the post office. Change your address books. Henry W. Coe State Park's mailing address is now:

9000 East Dunne Avenue
Morgan Hill CA 95037

And the Pine Ridge Association's mailing address is now:

9100 East Dunne Avenue
Morgan Hill, CA 95037

Note that these addresses have a different zip code than the old post office boxes. Coe Park's P.O. Box 187 is now closed, but the Pine Ridge Association's P.O. Box 846 will continue to be used for a few more months.

It's great to have a real street address, but the post office is not delivering mail to the park yet. It's delivered at the bottom of our driveway, at street boxes on the east side of Morgan Hill. Still, it's an improvement.

New Members through August

by Margaret Mary McBride

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

Ed Abbott, San Francisco
Olive Bavins, San Francisco
Paul Billig, San Jose
Rick Campbell, Morgan Hill
Aaron Chacon, San Jose
Chambers Family, Morgan Hill
Tom Chipman, Sunnyvale
Luigino De Grandis, San Mateo
Ginny Fleming, Menlo Park
Jim Foran, San Jose
Carol Fuller, Santa Cruz
Tami Koval, Morgan Hill
Rick Leonard, San Jose
S. Martin & A. Winterling, Watsonville
Nick & Pat Nickol, Gilroy
Michael O'Halloran, San Jose
Steve & Linda Richmond, Felton
Lois Robin, Santa Cruz
Joy Safakish, San Martin
Ronald Siechen, Morgan Hill
Paula Suddes, Ojai
Vivian Tracy, San Mateo
Mike Waughtel, Mill Valley
Mike Zensius, Campbell

We need your help to keep our membership list current and accurate. If you are a paid member, your *Ponderosa* mailing label includes an expiration date. (No expiration date for life members and organizations.) If you have any questions regarding your membership or if you would like to update your address, please contact us.

E-mail: PRA@CoePark.org
Snail mail: 9100 East Dunne Avenue, Morgan Hill, CA 95037
Fax: 408/778-5749
Phone: 408/779-2728

PRA Calendar

Saturday, October 4: **Fifth Annual Fall TarantulaFest and Barbecue**. Join us at the Coe Headquarters campground for a day of fun. Go on walks, listen to the songs of the Tarantulas, and enjoy the BBQ (for those who purchase a meal ticket in advance). Check out the Coe website for more details at *http://www.coepark.org/tfest.html*.

Saturday, October 18: **Barbed Wire Fest.** Join in the fun of helping to remove barbed wire from the park. Please call the Coe Park Visitor Center for more information (408/779-2728).

Saturday, November 1: **Fall Trail Day.** Help maintain the trails at Coe Park. No previous experience necessary. For more information and to sign up, contact the Trail Day coordinator (831/623-1659). The website describes what a typical trail day is like: *http://www.coepark.org/trailwork.html.*

Saturday, November 29: **PRA Coe Thanksgiving Saturday.** Celebrate Thanksgiving Saturday at Coe Park. Bring a dish and drinks to share. Hors d'oeuvres will be served starting around 4 p.m. This is always a fun event, rain or shine. Please call the Coe Park Visitor Center for more information and to sign up (408/779-2728).

There are still some evening programs and day hikes on some Saturdays in September. Please check the website for times and topics:

http://www.coepark.org/programs.html

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Dan McCranie, Treasurer and Volunteer Committee Chair
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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 94062-3512; or call 650/851-7813.

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