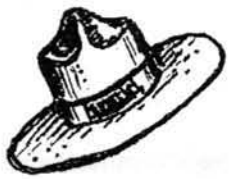
The **Ponderosa**

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

Late Spring 2003

From under My Brim



by Barry Breckling

A Dam Site Worse

The Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) has a problem. They call their problem the "Low Point Problem," and it involves algae. One of their proposed solutions to the problem is to build a reservoir that would back water up into Henry W. Coe State Park. This solution is called a "storage solution." The way I understand it, during late spring and early summer the reservoir would provide a place to store water, and the stored water would be used in the late summer and fall. SCVWD owns water over in the Central Valley that they pump over to the Santa Clara Valley, and they could pump that water into their new Coe Park reservoir.

Personally, I'm having trouble understanding the need for a new reservoir. SCVWD already has the option of filling Anderson Reservoir, the water district's largest reservoir, with their Central Valley water. In the many years the SCVWD has had that option, not once have I seen the level of Anderson come up during the summer. It just keeps dropping all summer long. They also have the ability to store water in Calero Reservoir. During 25 years of watching Anderson Reservoir, I've noticed that in wet years, when the valley doesn't need a lot of water, Anderson always has plenty. In dry years, when the valley needs water, Anderson has very little. So, gee, all we need is another reservoir that's full in wet years and low in dry years! It just doesn't make sense to me. When I asked the SCVWD why they didn't use Anderson for storage, their reply was vague and unenlightening. And, I'm still wondering how a "storage solution" fixes an algae problem. Well, I guess they must know something that I don't know.

I would like to set "storage solutions," "Low Point Problems," algae, and other scum aside. The biggest problem I see is this: Should a water district even consider flooding a park, a sanctuary, a place that has been set aside to be protected in its natural state for all time, a place purchased for that exact purpose by the people of the State? Of course not! People have asked, "Wouldn't it be illegal for the water district to build a reservoir that would back water up into the park?" And, yes, it is against the law. (I jokingly mentioned to a water district official that I thought I should arrest them for conspiracy as it seemed that they were conspiring to build a reservoir that would back water up into a state park, which would violate numerous state laws. After all, damaging animals, plants, geological features, and archaeological features in a state park is against the law.)

People have also said, "If it's illegal, that must mean that they can't do it, right?" Wrong.

Inside this issue . . .

Love-life of a newt

Coe Park and the reorganization of state parks

Financial status of the Pine Ridge Association

New wildflower brochure can be ordered by mail

. . . and more!

recycled paper

Do you think that the magnificent Yosemite Valley could ever be dammed? Not likely, at this time, but a valley that rivaled the great Yosemite Valley was dammed!

In 1900, San Francisco Mayor James Phelan directed City Engineer Carl Grunsky to study 14 possible water source alternatives. Of the 14, Grunsky chose the Tuolumne River System, and the place to build a dam was obvious, a narrow, deep canyon at the down-stream end of the Hetch Hetchy Valley within Yosemite National Park.

The Hetch Hetchy Valley was described as a twin sister to Yosemite Valley. John Muir said, "It is estimated that about 7,000 persons have seen Yosemite. If this multitude were to be gathered again, and set down in Hetch Hetchy perhaps less than one percent of the whole number would doubt their being in Yosemite. They would see rocks and waterfalls, meadows and groves, of Yosemite size and kind, and grouped in Yosemite style. Amid so vast an assemblage of sublime mountain forms, only the more calm and careful observers would be able to fix upon special differences."

In 1901, Mayor Phelan proposed the dam project. John Muir led the Sierra Club in opposition of the project. There was enough of a protest that Phelan's proposal was dropped—for the moment. Phelan tried again in 1903, 1905, and 1907. In 1908 it came up again, and again Muir headed the battle against the proposal. Public opinion strongly opposed the dam building, and Congress was flooded with letters demanding that the Hetch Hetchy Valley be saved. Major newspapers condemned the dam. The battle went on for five years and ended in Congress late in 1913. The House of Representatives accepted the Raker Act, and on December 6, 1913, the U.S. Senate passed the act (43 to 25 with 29 abstentions). The Raker Act gave the City of San Francisco use of lands within Yosemite National Park to construct, operate, and maintain dams, tunnels, and other structures necessary to develop a water and power system.

John Muir said:

> This damn Raker bill has upset everyone. Well, think on it. Three or four ambitious politicians and shifty traders calling themselves the City of San Francisco and bargaining like Yankee horse traders for half of the Yosemite National Park, working in darkness like moles in a low-lying meadow. The Senate passed the Raker bill two weeks ago at midnight session . . . and to gain the Almighty Dollar, they will turn that incredibly beautiful valley into a watertank. Dam up the Hetch Hetchy! We might as well dam up the people's cathedrals and churches. Use them as watertanks, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man.

Well, I get riled up too when someone thinks they can flood a sacred place. What about you?

As far as Hetch Hetchy is concerned, there are now credible considerations for removing the O'Shaughnessy Dam and restoring the Hetch Hetchy Valley!

As far as damming the Pacheco Creek and flooding Coe Park is concerned, I say forget about that, let's do it right. Let's do it in grander style. Let's do what I suggested years ago. Let's construct a dam at the Golden Gate. Then California won't ever have any water problems again.

Newts in Love

by Joelle Buffa

It was the day after Valentine's Day, February 15, 2002, and romance was still in the air . . . or more accurately in the water. My two backpacking buddies and I were enjoying the waning daylight at Henry Coe State Park's Poverty Flat Campground, a pleasant 6-mile hike from the Coe Ranch Visitor Center via the Monument, Frog Lake, and Middle Ridge Trails. Walking along Middle Fork Coyote Creek, we spotted a California Newt (*Taricha torosa*) swimming slowly upstream. Soon we spotted another, and quickly amended that sighting to a couple. Barely discernable as a pair, they were proverbially joined at the hip in an embrace. The larger animal, which we presumed to be the male, had draped himself completely over the female with his tummy and breast pressed tightly against the female's back. His front arms hugged her torso, and he stroked her sides and lower belly with a gentle motion that can best be described as a caress.

Even though 25 years as a professional wildlife biologist should have conditioned me differently, this cuddling behavior exhibited by a creature that most people probably view as cold and creepy touched me warmly.

Soon we spotted other amorous amphibians, locked in similar embraces, and singles apparently looking for love in just the right place. Had we stumbled across the newt equivalent of a singles bar? Before darkness and cold sent us scurrying to our tests, we witnessed "pickups," "divorces," and even a ménage à trois.

The morning chill was metaphorically eased by our anticipation of checking out the hot dating scene, still in progress. All told, we counted at least eight pairs and over a dozen singles in a stretch of stream less than half the length of a football field.

As we hiked along the Cougar, China Hole, and Springs Trails (about 5½ miles) to complete our look, we thought of all sorts of questions to ask the ranger when we returned to the Visitor Center.

Question: Do Newts actually "do it," or are the eggs fertilized externally? (Answer: The male deposits a sperm packet on the pond floor, which the female picks up into her vent during the mating process, and the eggs are fertilized internally.)

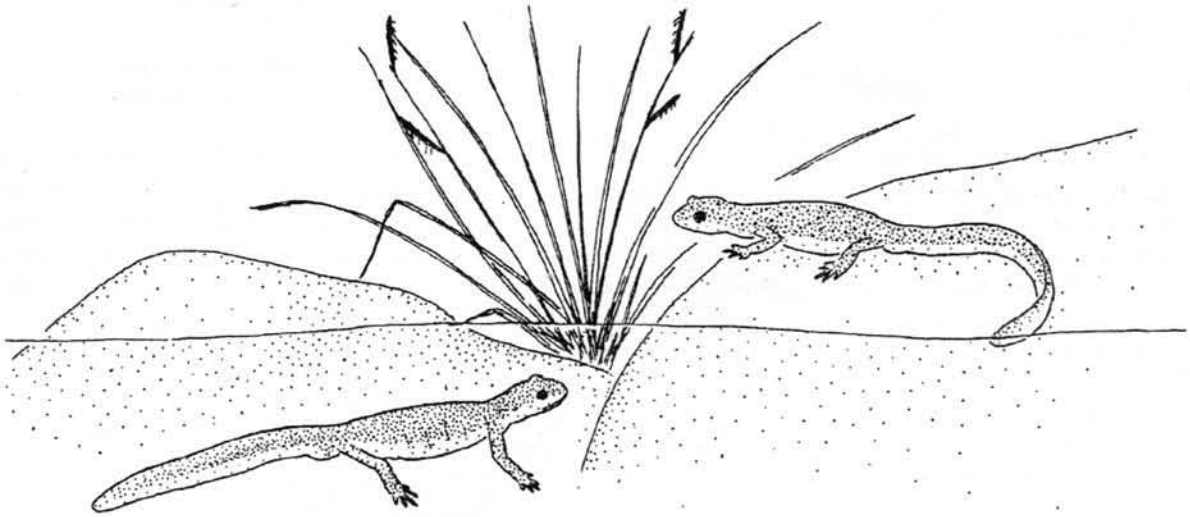
Question: Do they lay eggs? (Answer: A couple of weeks after mating, the female secures several golf-ball-sized egg clusters to underwater rocks or plants.)

Question: Where do Newts spend the rest of the year? (Answer: Buried in a moist burrow or under a log in a semi-torpid state.)

Question: How far do they go, and how do they find their way back to the stream? (Answer: They migrate up to several miles, by odor and topographic cues, back to the stream where they were hatched.)

Question: What do they eat? (Answer: Worms and slugs.)

Probably tiring of our questions, the helpful ranger offered to photocopy an article on California Newts for us. It was full of facts, but it waxed poetic at one point describing the mating process as a "carefully choreographed underwater ballet." I couldn't have described better the thrilling command performance we viewed from our front-row seats.



Park News

by Dennis Imhoff
Acting Park Superintendent

Hello everyone. I've had the opportunity to meet many but not all of you. I'm Dennis Imhoff, the Acting Superintendent of Henry W. Coe State Park. I must admit I've been dragging my feet somewhat in writing this article in the hopes I would have some concrete information on our reorganization to share with you. This reorganization has certainly given me some ideas on new slogans: "We should know by next week . . ." comes quickly to mind.

As most of you know, the financial condition of our State is grim. Significant cut backs have been requested all around. In an effort to meet the needed cut backs in our Department, we made a commitment to eliminate positions and reorganize our districts. Those cutbacks were done in such a manner as to significantly reduce the impact to field operations and direct public support. Many middle management positions (such as Kay Robinson's) were eliminated. Oversight of those eliminated positions was moved upward to the next level of management. One factor that has remained since the reorganization concept's inception is that Henry W. Coe State Park will become part of the Monterey District. How the sector will be aligned or who the sector superintendent will be is still uncertain. Several current District Superintendents are looking at promotional opportunities due to retirements and the reorganization. The alignment with Monterey District is to take place on or about July 1, 2003. That in a nutshell is where we are with the reorg.

What comes next is the vital role the current staff and the many skilled and motivated volunteers as well as the Pine Ridge Association will play over the next few months. Your skills and knowledge will be the cohesive energy that keeps Henry Coe on track in providing the Department's mission. Our mission is the commonality that keeps us focused during changing times. We'll always have changes, and mostly they are positive. We need to harness change, as it can be our servant or our master. Change has become the usual rather than the exception. I have no doubt that with the team we have at Henry Coe, this reorganization is a minor bump in the road. There will be opportunities to learn how better to run the operation. Monterey District has suggested that they will assign a Resource Ecologist just for Henry Coe. Several land purchases are on track. The Gilroy Hot Springs purchase is moving ahead, as is the Dowdy Ranch project.

Even though there are threats to Henry W. Coe State Park, my perception of those entrusted as guardians of this special unit is that they are well prepared, active, and tenacious. My tenure at Coe will be relatively short but has already been rewarding. Thank you.

Coe ♬

by Barbara Bessey, President, PRA

Apparently Mother Nature did not see the Coe Park calendar on which the 2003 Coe Backcountry Weekend was to have been held on April 26–27. We got the call that the event was being canceled just as my husband and I were in the process of loading all of the camping gear into the vehicle on Friday afternoon. I understand that over 1,000 individuals were affected, including a hundred volunteers and numerous state employees. Although we were all disappointed, I know that those of us who were in the backcountry for the 1994 event, where we had lots of rain once everyone was already into the park, encountered a trying time. Those back country roads, which usually seem so dry and hard, turned to a fudgy, gooey mess, which made it a long and arduous journey out of the park. So let's hope that we can put next year's event on Mother Nature's calendar early!

Barry's article provides more information about the dam issues. In addition, the newly formed group called Advocates for Coe (*http://www.coeadvocates.org*) also provides information about the threats to Coe Park, including pictures of the park areas possibly affected by the dams. If you would like to know more information about these threats and to help support the park, please contact us.

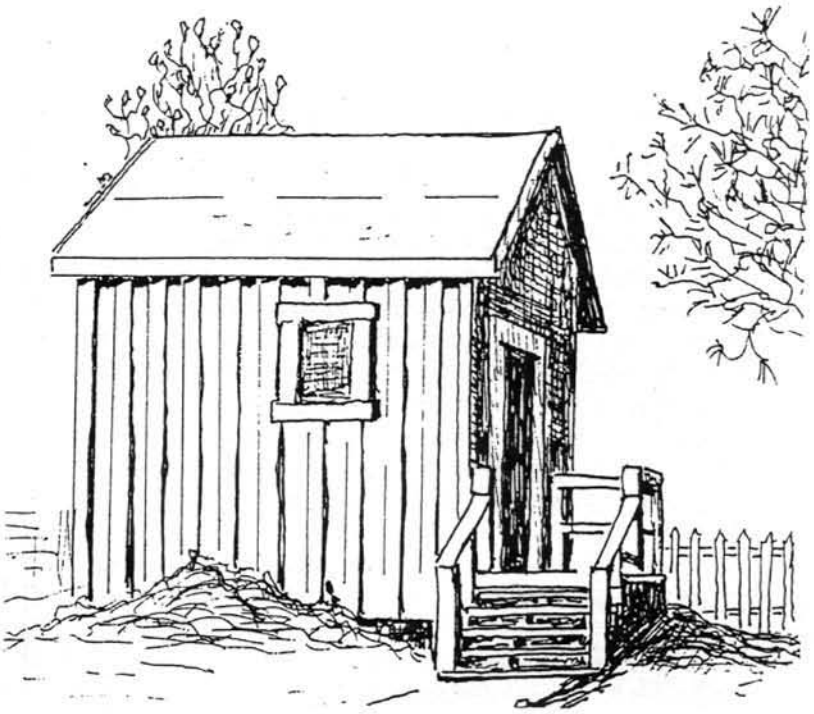
There is still time to enjoy the springtime programs at Coe Park. The current schedule of activities extends through May. Topics of Saturday evening programs include the birds of Coe Park, mountain lions, flowers and critters of Coe, identifying mammal tracks, and a slide show highlighting the four seasons at Coe. You can also join volunteers for Saturday hikes, including an interaction-with-nature hike, ecology hike, and one where the participants can decide just how far to hike.

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 at any time with your comments or suggestions (bbessey@air.org).

See you at the park!

PRA Financial Highlights

by Dan McCranie, Treasurer



The financial health of the PRA remained strong throughout 2002. During the year we increased our net assets by $34K to a total of $341K. The donations/spending elements for 2002 were as follows:

Major Sources of Funds

• Donations at interpretive events	$15K
• Contributions	$20K
• PRA dues	$6K
• Profit from Visitor Center sales	$18K
• Fund-raising events	$9K

Major Uses of Funds

• Interpretive events	$15K
• Volunteer training	$6K
• PRA management and newsletters	$13K

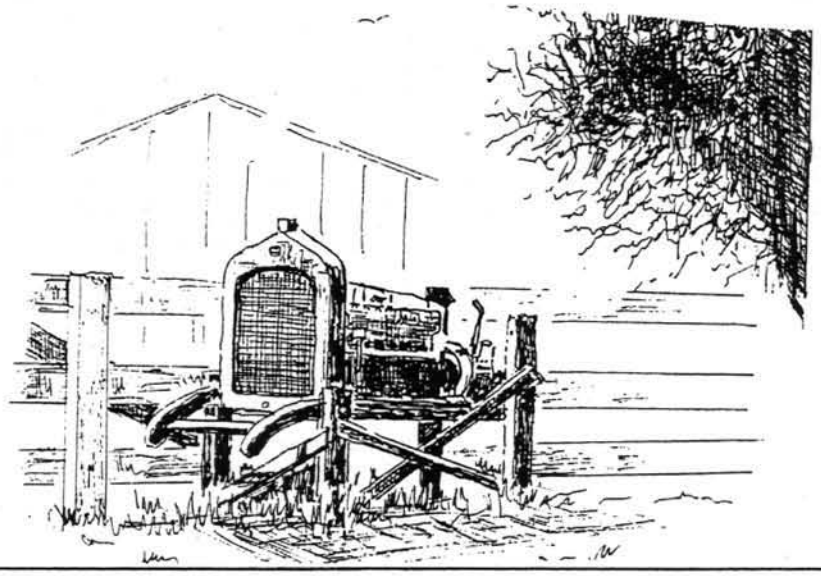
Balance Sheet Highlights

Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	
Checking accounts	$35K
Visitor Center expansion fund	$149K
Other money market accounts	$43K
Cash on hand	$1K
Equities (GMAC, Coca Cola, Exxon)	$58K
Inventory for sale	$44K
Fixed assets	$11K
Total Assets	$341K

As a result of the past and current successes of the Henry W. Coe Volunteer Program and the Pine Ridge Association, we have, in the last several years, ended up with an annual net surplus of cash in the range of $25K to $30K. Funding part of the eventual expansion of the Visitor Center is our major goal, but we should also be looking for ways to convert some of this surplus into additional interpretive programs for the park. Some of the more recent interpretive products (the new wildflower brochure and the Coe calendar) have been very creative and beautifully done . . . and they have ended up bringing more money into the PRA through sales.

I would certainly encourage you to give some thought to any new programs or events that you believe may be beneficial to our park. I know the PRA Board has been extremely receptive to any new ideas.



Songs from the Annual Meeting
by David Perrin

I have received a number of inquiries about the words to the songs that the Tarantula Band produced and sang at the PRA Annual Meeting in February in honor of Ranger Barry Breckling. Members of the illustrious arachnid songsters include Robert George, Michael Billo, William Holl, Rosse Hemeon, and David Perrin. Additional members include Greg Scott and Bonnie Doran. You can see pictures of the group on the Coe website at *http://www.coepark.org/tarantulas/the-band.html#top*. The following songs were affectionately dedicated to Barry on his 25th anniversary at Coe Park.

The Ballad of Barry Breckling (The Ranger at Coe Park)
© 2003 Tarantula Tunes

Lives on a mountain top in Morgan Hill.
Never met an animal he wanted to kill.
Tracks big lions just to get a thrill.
And you never catch him driving a Coupe de Ville.

Barry, Barry Breckling, the ranger at Coe Park.

He's the kind of ranger that knows his snakes.
When it comes to search and rescue, he's got what it takes.
He drives down the hill never touching the brakes,
On his way to McDonalds for their chocolate shakes.

Barry, Barry Breckling, the ranger at Coe Park.

There's nothing to the rumor of his fear of heights.
After all he's 7-10 in his ballet tights.
Gets his kicks flying solo on enormous kites
Way up high where he can see all the city lights.

Barry, Barry Breckling, the ranger at Coe Park.

If he thinks it's a road, he'll take his truck
Off the edge of a cliff to test his luck.
In Hoover Lake he once got stuck
Up to his axles in sticky muck.

Barry, Barry Breckling, the ranger at Coe Park.

Under My Loincloth
© 2003 Tarantula Tunes

In the summertime a ranger uniform is hot,
Wearing just a loincloth really helps a lot.
Just wear a loincloth, that's all it takes,
And it makes a fine place to keep your rattlesnakes . . .
Under my loincloth—loincloth!!

Snakes
© 1998 Tarantula Tunes

When the snakes come crawlin' in
When the snakes come crawlin' in
It must be Coe Park in the summer,
When the snakes come crawlin' in.

Hound's Tongue
Cynoglossum grande
Boraginaceae, the Forget-Me-Not family

Coe Park Wildflower Brochure Available!

A brochure containing beautiful images of 68 spring wildflowers that you would commonly see at Coe Park has been published and is now available for sale at the Visitor Center or by mail. Victor Bubbett, Winslow Briggs, and Ann Briggs spearheaded this development effort, with assistance from Don Mason, Judy Mason, and David Hildebrand. The text about each flower was written by Barry Breckling and Judy Breckling. The photographer of each flower is also indicated. This is a great publication and one that will make it easier to identify the spring wildflowers that you encounter along the trails.

The brochure is sold at the Coe Park Visitor Center for $3.25 (including tax). Or you can order one by mail for $4.00 (including tax) by mailing a check payable to the Pine Ridge Association to: Wildflower Brochure, P.O. Box 846, Morgan Hill, CA 95038-0846.

New Members through March

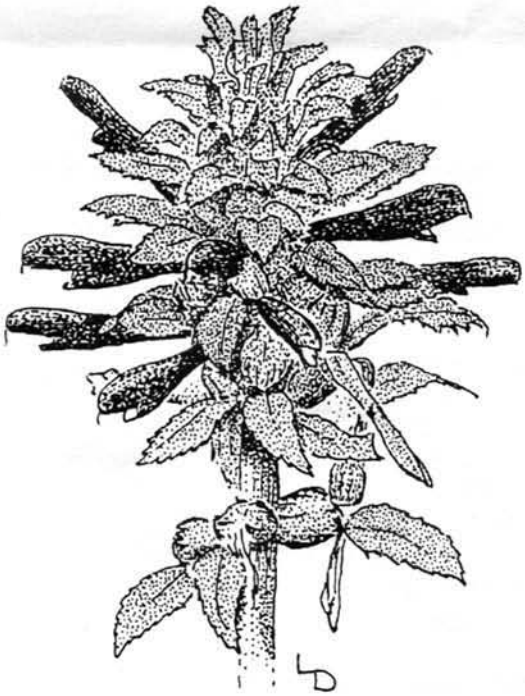
by Margaret Mary McBride

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

Conrad Carpenter and Jerry Einyoung, San Jose
Karen Garnett, Morgan Hill
Bud & Carol O'Hare, Morgan Hill
John Scanlon, Watsonville
Dean Silvers, Santa Cruz
James Spohrer, Santa Clara
Janet Wagner, Woodside

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: P.O. Box 846, Morgan Hill, CA 95038-0846
Fax: 408/778-5749
Phone: 408/779-2728



Indian Warrior
Pedicularis densiflora
Scrophulariaceae, the Snapdragon family

PRA Calendar

Sunday, May 11: **Mother's Day Breakfast at Coe Park.** This event has sold out as of the end of April. For additional information, please check out the Coe website at *http://www.coepark.org/mothers-day.html* or contact the Coe Park Visitor Center (408/779-2728).

Saturday to Monday, May 24–26: **Memorial Day Weekend Activities at Coe Park**. Starting at 10 a.m. on Saturday is a strenuous discovery hike to China Hole (and back). On Saturday and Sunday evenings at 8 p.m. are interpretive programs at the Coe Park Visitor Center. On Sunday and Monday, wildflower walks will be held at 11 a.m. and at 2 p.m. starting from the Visitor Center. For more information, please check out the Coe website at *http://www.coepark.org/programs.html* or call the Coe Park Visitor Center (408/779-2728).

Saturday, June 14: **Fifth Annual Hunting Hollow 10K Run / 5K Walk.** Join us for a day of fun and great exercise! If you haven't had a chance to explore the Hunting Hollow area, this is a great opportunity to do so. For more information about the event and to receive an application form (or to get inspired by reading the list of winners from last year's race), check out this link on the Coe website: *www.coepark.org/hh-10k.html.* Proceeds benefit the Coe Park Visitor Center Expansion project.

Saturday, June 21: **A Summer Barn Dance.** Come dance to the music of the Tarantulas Jug Band, have a country supper, and enjoy other entertainment. See the enclosed flyer or call Rosemary Rideout (408/847-5729) for more information or to purchase tickets.

Friday to Sunday, August 22–24: **Coe Park Rummage Sale.** Start saving your items to donate to the rummage sale; the proceeds further the programs at Coe Park. If you would like to donate used items to sell or help with this event, please contact event coordinator Bambi Moise at 408/294-0767.

Saturday, October 4: **Fifth Annual Fall TarantulaFest and Barbecue**. Save the date on your calendar for this very enjoyable event. More details will be provided later. In the meantime, check out the Coe website at *www.coepark.org/tfest.html* or contact the Coe Park Visitor Center (408/779-2728) for more information.

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(408) 779-2728
http://www.coepark.org

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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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