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

The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

Early Spring 2004

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

Aquila

I am the eagle who nests high above Paradise Flat, and my relatives have been reigning over these mountains since before people first came here. This morning it is not my hunger that urges me to seek food. It is the desire to feed my young and my mate. I can feel the warm air from below lifting my wings higher and higher as my near motionless body spins in wide gentle circles. My mate of 18 years is comfortably huddled on the nest keeping our downy white chick warm. In late winter as the days started becoming longer, my mate and I had danced in the air as we'd done every year. Before long, she laid a single egg in our giant nest. She would incubate the egg and keep the chick safe. My job would be to provide food, but until the egg hatched, I would spend many afternoons sitting on the egg, keeping it warm.

We have two nests that we maintain constantly. We're using the upper one this year for our one chick. Last year we used the lower one for the two chicks that hatched.

The wind has not even had time to blow from Red Creek to the Robinson and I've already risen over 2,000 feet. As I swing to my left, I can see the spreading gray pine high on the mountain slope where my mate is protecting our chick, but I am too high above them to see even the nest.

With a dip of my right wing and a twist my tail, I start to circle to the right. My view is of ridges and canyons, of forests and woodlands and grasslands. It's late April, and the colors below are spectacular. Vivid greens of grasses and newly leafed-out oaks contrast with the bright yellow goldfields on the hillsides and flats. Some of the rocky, meandering creeks are ribbons of yellow from seep-spring monkey flowers, and slopes here and there are splotched with pinks and blues and purples from serpentine and grand linanthus, lupines, and owl's clovers. This is extraordinarily beautiful country.

As I look off to the left, to the north, I swing in that direction, tucking my wings halfway in, and start to descend to a spot in Robinson Canyon. The golden, amber-brown feathers of my head and neck are pressed flat against my body. The whistle of wind across my wings grows louder as I gain speed. Faster and faster I dive, tightening my wing muscles as I pull them tighter to my body. In this country, nothing can travel faster than me, except for maybe the prairie falcon. As I near the canyon bottom, I dive low and swing up into the top branches of a gray pine on the slope just above the val-

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A PRA-sponsored outing to Rock House Ridge

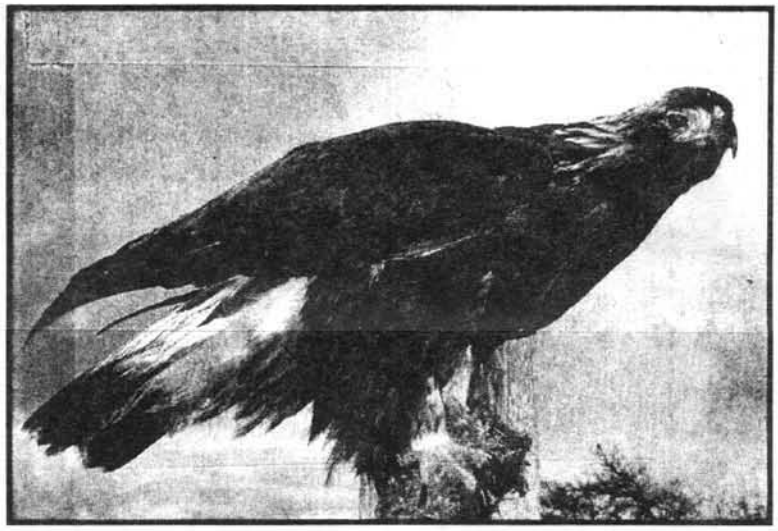
Training on bird identification and interpretation

. . . and more!

ley. I will sit and wait patiently.

People have called me Golden Eagle for the gold color of my head and the back of my neck, and they have also given me the scientific name *Aquila chrysaetos*. "Aquila" is the ancient Latin word for eagle. The Greek word "chrysos" means golden, and "ateos" means eagle. We don't live where people live. We live where it's wild and open. We avoid heavy forests, and although we occasionally fly along the fringes of towns and even large cities, we mostly avoid people.

From my perch I have a fine view of the open valley of the Robinson. Looking up and down the valley and then back up, I finally see something moving away from me 200 yards upstream. At that distance, it's easy to see that it's my favorite food, a jackrabbit. I take off into the wind and fly low, just over the tops of the patches of low brush, and I catch the jackrabbit unaware. Food for mate and chick is secure this morning, but I will need to be out hunting again before dark. Yesterday I caught a ground squirrel, and the day before that, the only food I could find was a mouse. Several days ago, I caught a quail at the edge of some brush near Bear Mountain and later a mallard duck flying out of a pool on Red Creek. Some days are not so good, and I've even had to settle for a lizard or a snake. Jackrabbits are best, but I never hesitate to eat from the carcass of a deer and other dead animals.



After delivering the rabbit meat to my mate on our nest, I head out again to look for more food. I push off with my long feathered legs and unfold and spread my long dark wings. I fly south into the Orestimba Valley, more of the 30 square miles we defend as our territory. Off towards Long Ridge I see another eagle. It's a young eagle, a male looking for a home. The broad band of white at the base of his tail and white areas under his wings reveal his youth. We both have golden heads, but the consistent dark brown color of the rest of my feathers will tell this trespasser who is to be respected. I rise on a warming column of air and then dive at the other eagle. He flips upside down and thrusts his sharp talons toward me. I grab his talons and we begin to spin in windmill circles towards earth. As we near the tree tops, he lets go. We both gradually spiral up, and I dive at him and continue to chase him until he is over Long Ridge.

The brightness of spring has past, and the tawny colors of summer have taken over. Our offspring is no longer a chick. Her body is now larger than her mother's. Every day she stands at the edge of the nest and flaps her wings and even becomes airborne, a bit. She'll walk out on some of the limbs, but urging screeches from her parents don't bring flight, not yet.

Last year one of our two chicks killed the other weaker sibling, which is not uncommon. We have seldom had more than one offspring survive. Of the 32 young we have reared, only 7 have lived long enough to have their own young. Predators and disease take their toll, but others have died from poisoning, gunshots, power line electrocutions, and collisions with wind turbines.

This year's chick started as an egg laid in the first week of March, and she hatched in the middle of April. She was ravenous and needed little encouragement to take the food I brought her, but now I bring the food to the nest and she feeds herself.

Finally on a warm late afternoon in July, she took wing, flew across the canyon, and landed on a large rock. After a 20-minute stay on the rock, she returned to the nest. It was a good start, and we'll spend the rest of the summer teaching her how to hunt and master the skies.

On a drizzly, gray October day I searched for my mate and could not find her. My eagle eyes could not locate her, my loud screams would not bring her. The next day I found her at the side of a dirt road, dead. Only a month earlier our offspring had gone off on her own. Did my mate die of old age—she was 24 years old—or was it something else? Will her strength and beauty continue in the life of our fledgling? I have hopes that this year's young eagle will raise more eagles, but her chances are not very good.

I am 25 years old. My life has been hard, and I suspect I will not survive many more years. Rough life or not, I have been blessed with the exhilaration of flight, with magnificent views from on high, and with the joys of raising little ones. But now, the lengthening light of late winter will no longer bring times of flying in unison just above my mate or mimicking her rollercoaster swishing dives from thousands of feet up. No more dancing in the wind, no one else to feed, no more little eggs to keep warm.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

- Wingspan 6½ to almost 7½ feet.
- About 3 feet tall.
- Females larger than males.
- Speed in a dive may exceed 100 mph.
- Don't become sexually mature until 4 years old or older.
- Nest on inaccessible cliffs or in large trees. Nests usually start at about 3 feet across but repaired and added to over many years of use and may become as large as 8 feet across. Usually have more than one nest (can have 10 or more per pair).
- Territory varies greatly in size, but in our area likely about 35 square miles.
- Found throughout western North America, from northern Canada and Alaska south into Mexico. Also in Europe, Asia, and Northern Africa.
- Persecuted for years as a sheep killer. Over 20,000 were killed in the 1950s. Able to take lambs, but studies indicate they rarely do. Eagles unable to kill full grown sheep (but will feed from dead ones they find). Eagles do more good for sheep herders keeping rodent populations down. The rodents compete for grass with sheep.
- Became a full protected species in 1962.

Park News

by Michael Ferry
Supervising Ranger

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself: Michael C. Ferry, the new Supervising State Park Ranger for Henry Coe State Park. I was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and moved to California at the age of four. I grew up in the East Bay area, playing in my backyard—which was Mount Diablo State Park. After graduating from high school, I moved to Yosemite National Park, doing seasonal work. I graduated from California Polytechnic State University with a degree in Natural Resources Management and a minor in Parks and Recreation. I began my career with Monterey County Parks with an internship back in 1980; I worked up the ranks (park aid, seasonal ranger) and became a permanent Ranger working at San Antonio/Nacimiento Lakes. I was hired by State Parks in 1987 and began my Ranger career working at Pismo Dunes SVRA. After a few years at wild Pismo, I transferred to Hearst Castle Historical Monument, in San Simeon District. I continued to migrate up the California coast and transferred to the Santa Cruz District working in many different parks in the district such as Seacliff State Beach, New Brighton State Beach, and Natural Bridges State Beach. I spent my last three years working along the north coast of Santa Cruz at the beautiful Wilder Ranch State Park.

My wife, Susan, also works for State Parks as a Communications Operator in Monterey. We currently live in Prunedale with our ten-year-old son, Alec, where we own three acres with three horses, two goats, and several cats. I am an outdoor enthusiast, spending much time rock climbing, skiing, fishing, and horseback riding.

I look forward to the challenges ahead at Henry Coe State Park. It has been on my "someday list" to work at Coe, and now it is a dream come true. I have heard great things about the volunteer program and the Pine Ridge Association and am looking forward to meeting and working with all of you.

PRA Annual Meeting a Success!

by Barbara Bessey

The annual meeting of the Pine Ridge Association was held this year in Morgan Hill on February 7. Barbara Bessey opened the Pine Ridge Association portion of the meeting. She introduced the members of the Board of Directors and reported on the results of the election of officers. The officers of the Board of Directors for 2004 are: Ann Briggs, President; Barbara Bessey; Vice-President; Winslow Briggs, Secretary; and Dan McCranie, Treasurer. The other board members are Stephanie Charles, Kevin Gilmartin, David Perrin, Dennis Pinion, and Priscilla Campbell (Uniformed Volunteer Committee Chair). President Ann Briggs briefly summarized the mission of the PRA. She reminded the PRA members that the board welcomes applications for funds for projects that fit within the association's mission and gave some examples of such projects. Kevin Gilmartin described the next two brochures that the PRA has funded on the "critters" of Coe Park, namely its birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. The brochures are expected to go on sale in the Visitor Center later this spring. Winslow Briggs talked about three new PRA-sponsored publications that are in the final stages of production. These are books with selections of From under My Brim articles (by Ranger Barry Breckling), trees of Coe Park (by Lee Sims), and a collection of writings by Sada Coe. David Perrin described another association-sponsored project, namely the support of the Landmark Volunteers, a group of students who pay to come to Coe Park and carry out whatever projects need doing. Barbara Bessey showed the results of another project, a binder of photos and text of Coe Park wildflowers that association member David Hildebrand was producing.

Dan McCranie presented a preliminary financial report for fiscal year 2003. The Association is in good financial health, although its performance this year was significantly lower than in the previous year. The net assets increased about $13,000 in 2003 compared with about $32,000 in 2002, the lowest increase in about six years. There were fewer visitor center sales, an increase in printing costs, and fewer donations, perhaps generally reflecting the economic downturn. The association broke roughly even on interpretive events largely because of unavoidable expenses for the canceled Coe Backcountry Weekend.

Association member Bob Patrie talked about the upcoming threat to Coe Park by the high-speed rail. He showed the various routes under discussion. The 700-mile network of rails would connect the Bay Area with Sacramento, the Central Valley, Los Angeles, San Diego, and inland. One of the routes under consideration would go through the Orestimba Wilderness area in Coe Park.

Barbara Bessey presented an update of what occurred at the fall 2003 conference of the California League of Park Associations. The PRA was asked to talk about the efforts undertaken to defeat the "dam" proposal that was under consideration by the Santa Clara Water District last year. Also during the conference, a publisher and a bookseller discussed how associations might want to publish their works. Two Pine Ridge Association publications were singled out for special praise: Teddy Goodrich's book, *Almost Eden,* and Winslow Briggs's book, *The Trails of Henry W. Coe State Park.*

Ann Briggs mentioned briefly the changes within the state parks system from being in the Gavilan District, then the Coe Sector of the Four Rivers District, and most recently in the Gavilan Sector of the Monterey District.

The meeting of the PRA uniformed volunteers followed, chaired by Priscilla Campbell. The number of active volunteers is approximately 130. These volunteers donated over 17,000 hours in 2003, which is approximately 8.5 full-time equivalent paid employees! Of this total, approximately 3,700 hours were spent staffing the Visitor Center. This is an amazingly large number of hours.

Priscilla gave a special accolade to all of the volunteers who have participated in the Coe Connections program, which has been headed by volunteer Marlene Testaguzza. Approximately 800–1,000 students and their teachers participated last year. And, of special significance, more than 80 percent of the attendees in past years return the next year. Special thanks were also given to the Coe Connections volunteers and supporters Nancy Valencia, Bill Frazer, Stew Eastman, Bill Workman, Dan McCranie, Heather Ambler, Priscilla Campbell, Ann Briggs, Don Savant, and Millicent Kellogg.

The volunteers were extremely active during 2003, as evidenced by the large number of award presentations that followed.

Seventeen trainees have progressed through the training program held on various weekends during the fall and are working toward Volunteer status: Ross Campbell, Colleen Combes, Darryl Dubois, Dewight Emery, Wayne Gilfillan, Ken Howell, Tami Koval, Rick Leonard, Kay Morshead, Bud Ohare, John Rosica, Diane Scariot, Ruthanne Shepherd, Ron Siechen, Doug Turk, Jeff Winkler, and Jim Wright.

A carabiner with a flashlight, which was engraved with the PRA logo to honor the recipients of the 2003 Visitor Service Award, was given to volunteers who spent 48 or more hours working in the Visitor Center or on other visitor-centered activities during the past year (e.g., presenting programs to visitors, leading interpretive walks or hikes). This year, forty-six volunteers received this award: Everett Allen, Heather Ambler,

Jim Bailey, Chere Barger, Norm Berube, Judy Breckling, Ann Briggs, Winslow Briggs, Victor Bubbett, Priscilla Campbell, Stephanie Charles, Ruby Domino, Phyllis Drake, Stew Eastman, Tim Fast, Bill Frazer, Rob Glover, Kate Hager, Don Holmes, David Hornby, Jodie Keahey, Linda Keahey, Gary Keller, Daniel Lewis, Don Mason, Judy Mason, Margaret Mary McBride, Dan McCranie, Mike Meyer, Chuck Nelson, Matt Pauly, Lois Phillips, John Prior, Don Savant, Pat Scharfe, Martie Sinclaire, Rob Sinclaire, Toni Sousa, Susan Stillman, Kitty Swindle, Marlene Testaguzza, Nancy Valencia, Bev VanderWeide, Libby Vincent, Chris Weske, and Bill Workman.

Eleven individuals, who had volunteered 200 or more hours of which at least 100 hours were spent in the Visitor Center, were promoted to Senior Volunteer status: Heather Ambler, Jim Bailey, Pat Dallam, Mike Harper, Greg Linden, Marcia Linden, Chuck Nelson, and Pat Scharfe.

Ten volunteers received special recognition for the tremendous numbers of hours they have spent on Coe Park volunteer activities over a period of years. Between them, they have donated over 22,000 hours to the park! Bonnie Stromberg, Dick Stone, Carolyn Tucker, and Dan McCranie each volunteered 1,000 hours of service. Rob Sinclaire, Toni Sousa, and Phyllis Drake each volunteered 2,000 hours of service. Don Mason, Kitty Swindle, and Joan Throgmorton each volunteered 4,000 hours of service.

A special silver pin with the association's logo is presented to those individuals who have participated in the volunteer program for ten or more years. Ten individuals were so honored this year: Joseph Belli, John Briese, Bonnie Doran, Sharry Dunn, Fitz Fitzharris, Bill Gringras, Dave Janich, Penny Michael, Thom Parks, and Toni Sousa.

A special gold pin is presented to those individuals who have participated in the volunteer program for twenty or more years. This year, a pin was presented to Janet Koff.

Barry Breckling, Coe Park Ranger, made a special presentation to those individuals who had donated 200 hours or more within the past year (this also includes the time spent by some uniformed volunteers who volunteered time to other state parks, and the time that some non-uniformed individuals volunteered to Coe Park). Each received a free annual pass to state parks in California. Thirty-two individuals received the award this year: Heather Ambler, Chere Bargar, Barbara Bessey, Judy Breckling, Ann Briggs, Winslow Briggs, Victor Bubbett, Priscilla Campbell, Ruby Domino, Phyllis Drake, Stew Eastman, Bill Frazer, Teddy Goodrich, David Hildebrand, Don Holmes, Jodie Keahey, Linda Keahey, Bill Levey, Daniel Lewis, Margaret Mary McBride, Dan McCranie, Mike Meyer, Bob Patrie, John Prior, Bruce Rideout, Martie Sinclaire, Bonnie Stromberg, Kitty Swindle, Marlene Testaguzza, Libby Vincent, Chris Weske, and Bill Workman.

Barry Breckling presented the Uniformed Volunteer Committee's Golden Bear Award for exceptional service to **Dan McCranie.** Dan became a uniformed volunteer in 2000. Since that time, he as donated more than 1,000 hours of service to Coe Park, including more than 200 hours in the Visitor Center. In the last year, he volunteered more than 450 hours. He has served on the Uniformed Volunteer Committee, including acting as its Chair. He assisted with the bookstore, the Uniformed Volunteer Training, and the Rummage Sale benefitting Coe Park and has presented programs to the public. He was appointed Treasurer of the Pine Ridge Association in 2002. He has many artistic talents as well, including building new benches for the Interpretive Room in which he etched tracks of birds and animals. He has also done an outstanding job of upgrading the volunteer newsletter to a professional color format.

The PRA Annual Award is given to an individual who has contributed outstanding work in furthering the mission of the association in preserving and enriching Coe Park. This year's award, which was presented by Barbara Bessey, went to **Marlene Testaguzza.** The PRA award was established in 1985, and there have been 23 previous recipients. Marlene became a Uniformed Volunteer in 1981; she has donated over 3,800 hours to the park. She has given many slide programs to the public on the ecology of the park; she has assisted with the training of new Uniformed Volunteers, and she has been actively preserving the various mounted birds and mammals on display at the park. She is probably most known for her work in designing and implementing the Coe Connections program, a program for elementary school children and their teachers. It was, in part, due to her program that the PRA was awarded the "Association of the Year" award by the California League of Park Associations in 2000. That led to us hosting the CaLPA conference in 2001. Had these events not occurred in the way that they did, the PRA would probably not have been so honored at the 2003 CaLPA conference.

This year, Dave Schaechtele and Ken Gray from the Monterey District made special presentations about the new district. Dave mentioned that Coe Park substantially increased the number of total acreage included in the district, as well as adding a large number of volunteer hours. In 2003, the total number of volunteer hours was over 63,000 for the entire district, and more than 17,000 of these hours were donated by individuals volunteering their time for Coe Park.

After all of the serious awards were presented, humorous awards were announced. This year's award presentations were hosted by the very creative and funny Barry Breckling and Lee Sims. After the meeting, a delicious lunch was pro-

vided by the Uniformed Volunteer Committee; special thanks to Chere Bargar, Kitty Swindle, Pat Scharfe, Phyllis Drake, and Greg and Marcia Linden for all of their efforts in the kitchen! A good time was had by all!

Congratulations to all!

PRA Spring Outings

All PRA members are invited to go on these outings. We will be highlighting wildflowers on the hikes we take.

March 27 and 28 (Saturday/Sunday) Rock House Ridge/East Fork Outing

We'll be camping at the Arnold Cabin (the cabin itself is unusable). We'll carpool from park headquarters in four-wheel-drive vehicles Saturday morning. There will likely be one small group of people leaving Saturday evening. We'll have two hikes (long and shorter) on Saturday, but both will be doing Rock House Ridge. The shorter hike will be for people who want to stop for wildflowers. We'll do one hike on Sunday. Some cross-country hiking will be required both days. The Arnold Cabin site has a single "useable" outhouse. You'll need to bring all your own camping gear, cooking implements, food, and water. Saturday night's meal will be a potluck. To sign up, call the park at 408/779-2728 and have the person who answers sign you up. Give them your name, phone number, e-mail address if you have one, and whether you have a four-wheel drive vehicle you could bring and drive. Specific information will go out to participants.

New State Park Fees at Coe Starting July 1, 2004

Day Use goes from $4 to $5 (and from $3 to $4 at Hunting Hollow).

Camping will go from $7 to $10 per night, and extra cars will go from $4 to $5.

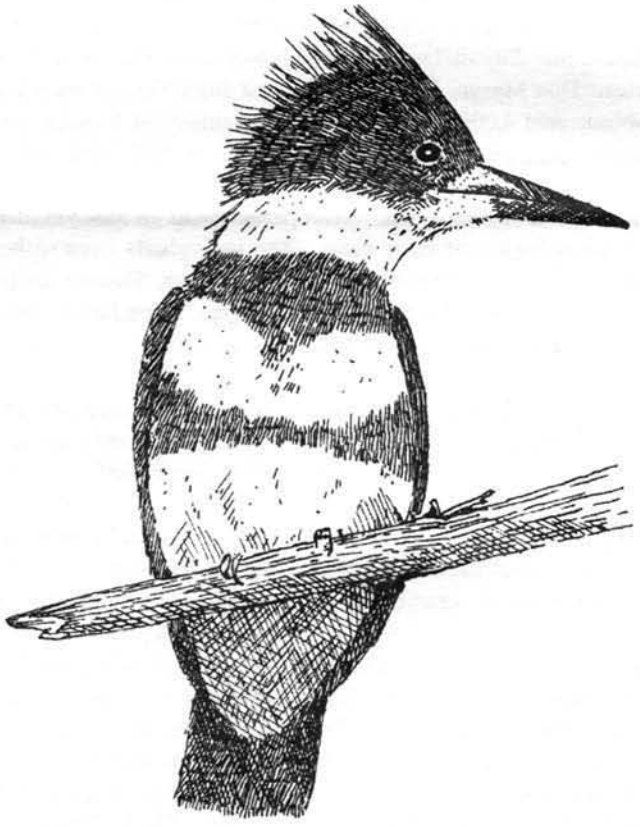
Backpacking will go from $2 to $3 per person per night

Group Camps will go from $15 to $30 per night

Horse camps will go from $12 to $14 per night.

Training on Bird Identification & Interpretation

If you would like to attend three morning training sessions on birds in Coe Park, please sign up. The training will be presented by Barbara Bessey and Kevin Gilmartin on three Sundays, **April 4, April 18, and May 16,** at the Coe Park visitor center. We will begin each session by taking a walk to identify birds by sight and sound. Then we will view slides, listen to bird calls, and discuss handouts. If you can't come to all the sessions, we will mail you the handouts for the sessions you missed. To sign up, send Kevin or Barbara your name, and if they don't already have it, your mailing address, telephone number, and e-mail address: 650/851-7813, KGilmartin@AIR.org, or BBessey@AIR.org.



New Members through January

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!

Edna Anthony, Rochester, WA
Rich Archdeacon, San Jose
Vladimir Baicher & Joellen Jarvi, San Jose
Scott and Cathy Bradley, Los Gatos
Dinesh Desai, Los Altos
Greg Dittmer, San Jose
Dewight Emery, Santa Clara
Michael and Susan Ferry, Salinas
Arvind Kumar, San Jose
Heath Kyle, Gilroy
Gary Litton, Stockton
Joseph Martinez, San Jose
The Phillips Family, San Jose
Amy Purchase Reid, Morgan Hill
John Rosica, Morgan Hill
Judy Savastano, Morgan Hill
Sandy Stanley, Morgan Hill

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

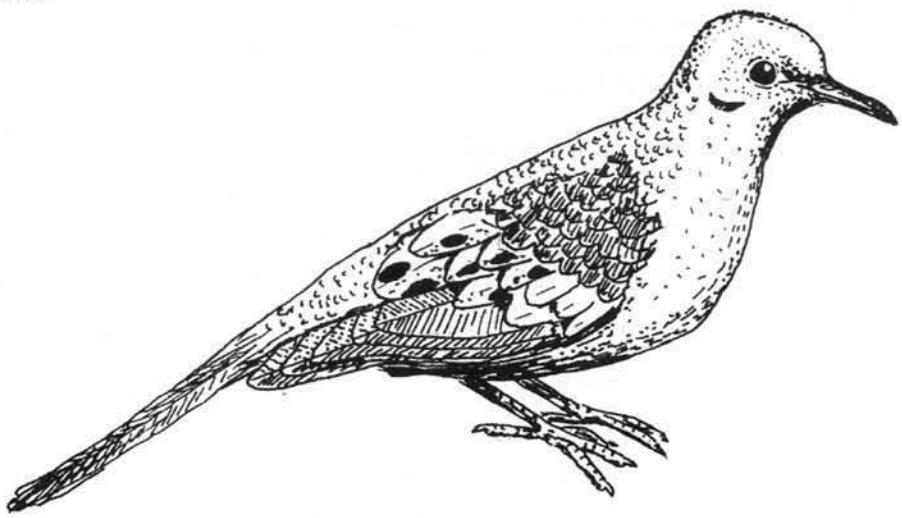
Saturday & Sunday, March 20 & 21: The start of the **Spring Programs at Coe Park**. The schedule is inserted in this issue of the newsletter. Generally, there are hikes on Saturdays, an interpretive program on Saturday nights, and two wildflower walks on Sundays throughout the spring season. Events are planned for both the Hunting Hollow and the main Morgan Hill entrances to the park. Please call the Coe Park Visitor Center (408/779-2728) for more information.

Saturday & Sunday, March 27 & 28: Join in a special PRA-sponsored weekend outing to **Rock House Ridge**. Overnight at Arnold Cabin on Saturday night. Please see the announcement on page 6 and contact Ranger Barry Breckling at the Coe Park Visitor Center (408/779-2728) for more information.

Saturday, April 12: **Trail Day.** Help work on trails in the park. For more information, please contact Ranger Cameron Bowers (408/779-2728).

Saturday, & Sunday, April 24 & 25: **Coe Backcountry Weekend.** Always a sell-out, please submit your application for admittance by March 27, 2004. An application form is available on our website: *http://www.coepark.org/orestimba-form.pdf.*

Sunday, May 9: **Mother's Day Breakfast at Coe Park.** Join us for this very popular event, which will be held this year at the Ridgeview camping area. Tickets will go on sale on April 15. Please see our website for more information: *http://www.coepark.org/mothers-day.html.* For more information, please contact Lee Sims (650/726-7547).



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Stephanie Charles
Kevin Gilmartin
Dave Perrin
Dennis Pinion

Michael Ferry, Supervising Ranger

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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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