The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

Autumn 2005

From under My Brim

by **Barry Breckling**
(with Germanish translation by Herr Patrick Goodrich)

Consider the Humble Bumblebee

"Jacob, haben you ein beer mit your zauerbraten, unt conzider vahnce again vat I asked. You bist ze grrreat ingenieur of aerodynamik und I am zimple eine biologe who vants to know howenzy verld eine bumblebee flieszenzy."

"Vell, Franz, let me do zome kalculation. Gibt me eine napkin und your pen, bitte. Eine kleine bumblebee veight about 0.2 or let uz zay 0.3 grrrams, mit eine total veeng zurface of almozt 140, maybe 150 sqvaren millimeterz. Za veengs beat almozt 120 times per zecond. Ya, das izt about richtig! Take ze koeffizient of ze luft drrrag, add ze vortex shedding, ze veengshpan vidth's flowenze, dividieren by ze koeffizient of ze lift. Ya, das ist correct! Hummmm, it's qvite clear, notz enough lift, ze bumblebee cannot fly! Nein, nein, nein. Es ist verboten!"

In the 1930s, noted Swiss aerodynamicist Jacob Ackeret was attributed with the "theory" that bumblebees can't fly. During a dinner party, a German biologist asked Ackeret to explain the aerodynamic capabilities of bumblebees. After jotting down some calculations on a napkin, Ackeret concluded that bumblebees could not possibly fly.

It was reported that the biologist leaked the theory to newspapers to demonstrate that engineering is not always superior to nature. And so began the myth that has persisted for over 70 years. Ackeret was said to have later figured out his mistake. His calculations were based on a flat, hard, smooth wing, but bumblebees have four supple wings with veins, and their flight is more like that of a helicopter than that of a flat-winged plane. In fact, bumblebee flight is fraught with complexities. Their wings move with an oscillating motion, and when the two wings on a side are brought together and then moved apart, they produce very strong vortices that generate lift.

Another story of how the myth started comes from farther south, from the French lab of the famous entomologist Antoine Magnan. His assistant Sainte-Lague, who was a trained engineer, did calculations on insect flight and concluded that it was impossible for bumblebees to fly. Apparently, just for the fun of it, Magnan included this conclusion in the introduction to his 1934 book *Le Vol des Insects* (The Flight of Insects).

Despite these "theories," bumblebees do, of course, fly, and they do quite a fine job of it. Well, some people have described their flight as rather erratic and bumbling, and that's how they got their common name. Bumblebees are in the genus *Bombus,* which means a buzzing or booming sound, likely for the sound of their wings in flight.

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. . . and more!

Bumblebees have presented yet another problem for scientists to ponder. Bumblebees fly at temperatures that seem far too cold for cold-blooded insects. They live above the Arctic Circle, and they're even found on Ellesmere Island in Canada, only 550 miles from the North Pole!

It has been discovered that bumblebees can mechanically uncouple their wings and use their flight muscles to generate heat. Bumblebees need to have an internal temperature of between 85° and 100° Fahrenheit before they can take off. On a cold morning, a bumblebee will work its flight muscles and can actually raise its temperature from 75° to 98° in about one minute. Once out of the nest, bumblebees continue to generate heat in flight. This capability allows them to be out earlier in the year and earlier and later during the day.

Bumblebees also warm their nests, keeping them in the mid-80°s, and they keep their eggs and larva warm. If the nest gets too hot, they fan the nest like honeybees do. With wings disengaged and muscles working, a bumblebee will lay its almost hairless abdomen on the egg or larva cases and can warm them up as much as 45°. Bumblebees store nectar in small wax bowls called nectar or honey pots, and on cold nights a bumblebee often uses up the contents of a nectar pot in the process of keeping eggs and larvae warm. The metabolic rate of bumblebees is actually higher than that of hummingbirds.

California has about a thousand species of native bees, 26 species of which are bumblebees. All bumblebee species have similar life histories. In the early spring (or even late winter in our area), over-wintering queens emerge and look for a nest site, often an abandoned rodent burrow. They collect nectar and pollen and store it in the nest. In general, nectar is adult food, and pollen is food for the larvae. But to get her colony started, the queen eats some pollen, which stimulates her to produce eggs. The eggs turn into larvae that pupate into sterile female adult workers. The workers, which are smaller than the queen, collect nectar and pollen for the nest and help feed and warm the larvae. In the fall, the queen lays two new types of eggs. Those eggs turn into queens and males. The male's only job is to mate with queens. The fertilized new queens will search out a protected spot to spend the winter and will emerge early the next spring. The workers and males die.

Bumblebees are very industrious animals. They may not be as numerous as honeybees—bumblebee nests are generally made up of only a few hundred individuals—but they out-produce honeybees by a large margin. A honeybee nest with 60,000 individuals can produce about one liter of honey per day. That many bumblebees would produce about eighteen liters of honey in a day.

Bumblebees have some special adaptations for collecting nectar and pollen. They are strong flyers and are able to carry up to 75% of their weight in nectar and pollen, although they usually carry about 25%. Their legs have pollen-collecting hairs with points and hooks that help hold large quantities of pollen. The structure of certain flowers allows only bumblebees to access nectar and pollen. An example is our native hillside pea. The bumblebee lands on the wings of the flower (the lower petals) and is heavy enough to open the flower. Our native bees and even the larger naturalized European honeybees don't have enough weight to open the pea flower. Some cultivated members of the pea family, such as alfalfa and clovers, are also open only for the heavy bumblebee.

Bumblebees often use their size and strength to bull their way into flowers. They use their long tongues to access nectar in long-tubed flowers. Their tongues can be over half an inch long. When all else fails, they even stoop to being nectar thieves: They bore a hole at the base of the flower and steal the nectar without doing the job of pollinating.

One group of plants, members of the night shade family, has flowers with pollen that is not easily removed. Bumblebees go to those flowers and do what's called "buzz pollination." They hang from the flower, disconnect their wings, and work their wing muscles until the pollen is vibrated loose. Tomatoes, which are members of the nightshade family, are often grown in greenhouses (now more commonly called glasshouses since they aren't green anymore). The tomato growers used to use a special vibrating tool to pollinate the flowers by hand. Now bumblebees are being raised commercially to do the job. Bumblebees are also being used to pollinate other glasshouse plants, such as blueberries, cranberries, peppers, strawberries, kiwis, carrots, and cabbage.

I've seen bumblebees on a very wide variety of flowers in the wild. They might be called the universal pollinator. In late winter and early spring, when the lowland shooting stars are blooming, you can watch bumblebees doing their buzz pollinating on the flower's anthers.

Until recently, I thought that the flowers of the wavy-leaf soap plant must be moth pollinated, since their blossoms are white and they bloom in the evening. They may well be moth-pollinated, but the only insects I've ever seen pollinating them have been the ubiquitous bumblebees.

Besides being industrious, interesting members of the animal world, bumblebees are adorable little creatures. The next time you see one, take a closer look, but remember, although they may look cuddly and they are rather docile, they are bees and they do have a sting.

Consider the humble bumblebee with its yellow and black fur coat,
flying this and that a'way, a wonderful subject for a poet.
Cuter than baby chipmunks, sassier than a scrub jay,
she's always the hardest worker and never gives into play.

From early in the morning 'til the time of dwindling light,
she's out making honey to treat her family right.
Now if I wanted a subject to turn into a rhyme,
I'd considered the humble bumblebee, at least I would this time.

Crazy Enough
by Mike Meyer

It was hot, a hundred degrees in Gilroy, a few degrees more back in the range of eastern hills. The Hunting Hollow parking lot was empty, the end of the Hot Springs road at Coyote Creek entrance still and quiet. For a Sunday afternoon, you take it as an ominous sign—no one crazy enough to be out now.

But you drift past the gate on the road above the creek into the sun. The force strikes the rocky, dusty surface, glazes the silent wall of earth, envelops dried snowberry leaves. The leaves on the creek willows hang dead on the branches; they fill the creek bed. The sycamores stand so still you can't focus.

You hear in your head the old refrain, "only you'd be crazy enough to . . ." and finish it ". . . go for a hike on a day like this." Oh well, there are others, you tell yourself. Probably out right now counting frogs or getting pictures of bugs. Besides, it's not that hot. Other than the loneliness of the place, you're fine.

Up and beginning the Grizzly Gulch Trail, there's the old redwood picnic table tilted on the slope, darkened under the shade of a live oak. More than once you've used that table bogged under the influence of the five-day-a-week job and commute—the routine—and have felt things settle away and center. But you're in kind of a hurry right now, you want to get back by dusk, so you only glance at the big old tree. It feels like looking past a friend on the street.

The forest walk is nice, shady and green, tree trunks, vines, clop clop, you're not tuned in. You wonder what you're thinking, but it's too hard to focus on the parade of thoughts, fragments of things you've said, fleeting premonitions. It's not easy being spaced out. Then a thought you notice: Maybe you'll be walking long enough that another tree or a deer or something will pull you free. Things happen.

You avoid looking directly at anything, not wanting to force it. The trail curves under the trees, drops to the gray rocks of the creek. No more tumbling rush of water you saw two months ago, not even a dark spot left in the sand. You cross and climb along the edge of the chasm, up under small blue oaks then north into the slope. At 5 o'clock the hillside of grass and oaks is ablaze still.

On the rubbly spine you feel the first signs of blisters. You finally wonder about the wisdom of breaking in new boots on the hike and mutter weakly, "they felt fine at REI." You edge sideways, use the ball of your feet, take longer strides, wonder where that gooseberry is you like seeing. Normally on the rubble, you slip and have to work harder to climb, but the boots hold fine. You're sweating now, the back is wet against the day-pack, the face slippery under the sunscreen that's washing off.

The steep spine passes surprisingly quickly, you stand at the sign that points to Jackson Field up above and look around for something that grabbed at you, a fleeting combination of hills recessing farther north before ascending toward the ridge, flanks in chaparral, oak on the slanting ridges, meandering lines of trees running the gullies, the sky, the light. But looking, it's only those things, the *something* is gone, and you admonish yourself for not being ready, *messing it up,* and move on.

Twenty-five, thirty minutes pass, you've walked under the trees east around a few bumps. You turn onto the Dexter and tell yourself you'll be on the ridge in thirty minutes. Then it'll be easy walking on the ridge, no heel burn. You walk steadily up, look around a little, see the rocky treed outcrop you used to wonder if a lion lived in. The band-aids you wrapped on your heels a few minutes ago feel balled up. Then you think about turning back. You think that if you had to run for help (like you always imagine happening) you couldn't do it. Like maybe there's someone unconscious beside a broken bicycle, you couldn't even get help with these heels; you think, you'd be useless.

The top's in sight maybe, past that round bulge of grass above you. Yea, it comes quickly, too, and you stand for a moment on the round top, waiting again. There's fog way over on the Monterey Bay. Unbelievable. Up above, gray cloud puffs like rows of dinner muffins with white fringes—show blue in the gaps, it's pretty. You trek the ridge, see new ridges to the east, notice how brown the chaparral has gotten, and down below a sliver of Kelly Lake tucked in the canyons. Bands of buckeyes across the hills are turned burnt orange, seems early, but up close there are a few live leaves still. The sun's behind the clouds, the light luminous in the white fringes, you can't judge its position high or low. You call the sun "the father star."

The Domino Pond Trail weaves a tightly wrapped canyon, you could touch both hillsides as you descend. Half mile to the pond, says the sign. Half a mile, 20 minutes. The west facing hillside is meager gray soil with sparse weedy grass in patches, sage the size of bunnies, midget oaks. This slope

bakes every day of the year. At the pond, a hawk lifts off the mud, its talons and feathered legs dangling, and flaps in a circle over the dam and up the ridge. You go for a look at its prints on the mud, see a knife-like scrape. The water is low, clouded muck with dark floating objects like decaying boar scat. You wet your lips with your tongue and spit. Wouldn't want to filter this stuff.

You hit Cattle Duster, now you can see out over the big canyons, the Coyote Creek canyon is deep, you follow the green gorge of it with your eyes, locate the park visitor center on Pine Ridge, see over to Blue Ridge, both more large hills than small mountains. The earth turns, the sun sinks below the layer of clouds, fills the land with strong but rich light. The trail wraps down, a hawk starts up *squarling,* you spot it big on top of an oak. You watch it *squeerling* or whatever that sound is, see it holding you in its sight. Then it jumps. It sails out over a slope of yellow grass in the sun, a bowl of sun-rich grass. The hawk wings toward you and flies over your head, you craning up seeing it against the gray puffs, against the blue. It sails over Jackson Canyon then comes back and angles toward the hill again; it carries your vision like a powerful myth come to life. When it's out of sight, still the light is filling this space between you and the oak and the grass hillside and the sky, then the canyon and opposite hillside are there strong and purely emitting themselves, the big IT-self, maybe the hawk was only a messenger. You don't walk now, you stay, held in the completeness of the sun's influence, the land's full presence.

You walk the trail winding over the hills under the trees down to the Coit then to Grapevine Spring. At the tub, you filter into your bottle and drink the cool, foul-smelling water. You walk down along the muddy course pocked with pig hoof prints. There's a sound you can't place and you stop. Is it a bunch of jets way off, the wind high up in the trees on the hill? You walk on down, around the mucked pond below the first spring, the trail passing between thick bushes. The sound rises again, it's flies, lots of them, in the bush by the water.

Down the trail then to the road deep in the canyon of Coyote Creek, the light now dusky, bluish. Looking back north there above the steep horizons, you see only a few clouds now, their underbellies lit like pearly pebbles strung across the ridges.

The road is a good surface, you let the eyes roam more. The light dims, a biker passes by. "Yeah, I know," he grunts when you say it's nice to see someone. You walk well, the boots loosened so nothing is bothering the heels. You walk aware of the land forms all about, not the trees or grass but the land. It begins with the great height of the mountain flanks way up, the ridge backs you see high and far up. Closer, it's the road cut you notice, how the hill is coming down, bulging where it's chopped. The land, it's the land that all else comes from, the land has in it what all else—the trees, the grass, you—needs, to be.

You walk around bends in the road looking over the widening creek bed, seeing above the trees below, then around a bend showing a new ridge climbing east. And the grass way up, just a patch of it surrounded by trees, still with just the palest coating of pink light, the grass patterns way up there on Steer Ridge in the deep blue of the dusky evening.

Park and District News

by C.L. Price
Sector Superintendent

Here is the latest information on some of the changes taking place at Henry W. Coe, Gavilan Sector, and the Monterey District.

First and foremost, I am very pleased to announce that we have a new heavy equipment operator named Javet Guaracha (seen in photo). Along with Javet, we also received a new road grader, as you can also see in the photo. For those who know what a toll rain can take on our road and trail system, help has arrived. Javet has been a long-time State Park Equipment Operator working most recently at Hollister Hills SVRA. His experience and expertise will help us make huge improvements in the park.

Jeannine Koshear, Associate Resource Ecologist, has recently decided to pursue a teaching career at Fresno City College and has resigned. We are in the process of filling her position. When the new position is filled, I am hopeful we can add to the resource inventory data collection efforts along with several other projects.

Elaine Hartman has also decided to retire and has moved to Arizona to be near her grandkids. We are already missing her around the sector office. Her position will also be filled very soon, I hope. The entire sector staff will miss her.

Mike Ferry, the Supervising Ranger for Coe Park, should return from his special assignment by the middle of October. I'm counting the days until he returns as well.

We have a new District Superintendent by the name of Mat Fuzie. Mat has replaced Phil Jenkins, who is now working in the Off Highway Vehicle Division of our department. Mat has come to us from Anza Borrego, where he was the District Superintendent. Anza Borrego is the only California state park larger than Coe, so he is aware of many of the issues, challenges, and threats that come along with our charge of protecting an incredibly valuable treasure.

Now on to the projects:

The Dowdy Ranch day-use development should be ready for a final walk-through inspection in the next couple of weeks. We have been anxiously awaiting the completion of this project for the past six months. When we have a definite date for the turnover, we will announce the date and time of the "Welcome to the Dowdy" celebration.

The Kickham Ranch unit office has just been outfitted with an ADA-accessible deck and several new exhibit shelters. We welcome any of the volunteer groups to come out and take a look at the new office. All are more than welcome to hold meetings at that location as well.

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New Uniformed Volunteer Training Class

by Priscilla Campbell

Applications for this year's new uniformed volunteer training class closed on August 13, 2005. Personal interviews were conducted on August 18 and 20. Ten candidates were selected. The new class will participate in nine days of training during the fall, with graduation to trainee status at the PRA annual meeting in February 2006.

Dan McCranie, Vice Chair of the Uniformed Volunteer Committee and Training Coordinator for the new class, praised the diversity of experience the class brings to Coe. The class includes:

Candace Britton - Candace is a high school student with a strong interest in biology and wildlife. She has attended Lawrence Hall of Science camps focused on marine biology and wildlife.

Hang Cui - "C.H." has a master's degree in computer science and has extensive experience in creating and maintaining web sites. He hails originally from mainland China.

Ken Hulick - Ken has over 25 years as a Ranger, Superintendent, and Law Enforcement Officer in the National Park Service. He is particularly interested in resource management. He enjoys public speaking.

Marianne Masteller - Marianne is working toward a master's degree involving the study of water quality in riparian habitats.

Jason Vega - Jason is a licensed paramedic. He has a strong interest in anthropology and history and would like to study and learn about the history of Coe Park.

Stan Soles - Stan has a master's degree in geology. He is an avid hiker and backpacker.

Richard Rawson - Dick has been a frequent visitor to Coe since 1967. He is a ham radio operator (N6CMJ), folk dancer, and amateur wildflower photographer.

Rosemary Schmidt - Rosemary is a retired elementary school teacher. She enjoys hiking in the park with her grandchildren and would like to become involved in the Coe Connections program.

Jean O'Young - Jean is from mainland China and speaks Mandarin. She and her husband, "C.H.," enjoy hiking and are looking forward to sharing the training experience. Jean has a master's degree in engineering as well as an MBA degree.

Chris Turner - Chris is involved in the production of outdoor-oriented television programs. He is a frequent visitor to Coe as a hiker and mountain biker.

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.

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 uniformed 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 might 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 11.** 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 Ann Briggs at 650/324-1455.

2005 Coe Cookbook

by Stew Eastman

The next time you visit the Coe Park Visitor Center, you should look for the new Coe Cookbook. This is our very first, and it is filled with recipes contributed by over 35 fellow PRA members and volunteers. The idea for this cookbook originated about eight years ago, and it has finally been published due to the efforts of one very persistent volunteer who happens to be a former editor of the San Jose Mercury News, Phyllis Drake.

You will recognize many of the contributors such as Everett Allen, Barry Breckling, Kevin Gilmartin, Phyllis Drake, Teddy Goodrich, and Libby Vincent because they are very active in the park. There will also be some surprises because PRA members who are no longer active such as Grant Bennion, Phil Frame, Kay Robinson, and Roberta Wright submitted many recipes.

Whoever you are, we think you will find something tasty or interesting in our selections. To whet your appetite, we have Dominick Savant's Antipasto, Barry's Best Fish, Garbage Can Cookies, Quick and Easy Chili, Rabbit Pie, Reduced Wild Pig Chili Verde, Soil Profiles, and many more.

We think this cookbook reflects the spirit of Coe Park. Anytime there is an activity at Coe, volunteers, PRA members, State Park employees, and local friends all take part. Anytime there are more than three volunteers working together, there is a sharing of food and swapping of tales. This sharing of food at these events encouraged new gastronomic efforts, which are the foundation of our cookbook.

New Members through August
by Jim Wright

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

The Phil Dye Family, San Jose
Mickey Ellinger, Scott Braley, Emeryville
Rusty and Marilynn Smith, San Jose
Diane Stewart, San Francisco

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 Ave., Morgan Hill, CA 95037
Fax: 408/778-5749
Phone: 408/779-2728

PRA Calendar

Saturday, October 1: **Fall TarantulaFest and Barbecue.** A separate flyer containing information about this fun-filled day has been mailed separately. Contact the Coe Park Visitor Center (408/779-2728) for more information.

Saturday, November 5: **Fall Trail Day.** Help maintain the trails at Coe Park. No previous experience necessary. For more information and to sign up, contact Ranger Cameron Bowers (*CBowe@parks.ca.gov*) or contact the Coe Park Visitor Center (408/779-2728). The website describes what a typical trail day is like: *http://www.coepark.org/trailwork.html.*

Saturday, November 26: **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).

Saturday, February 4, 2006: **PRA Annual Meeting.** All PRA members are invited to attend the association's annual meeting and graduation of the 2005 class of uniformed volunteers.

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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 Coe State Park through education and interpretation. Articles and artwork relating to the natural history, 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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