The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

Summer 2005

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

Coyote Creek in June

In many parks, it is improper etiquette to go off-trail, and in some preserves and reserves, it's illegal to do so. At Coe Park, leaving the trail is acceptable and can lead to fine adventures. Going cross-country can involve dangers, but if you're conscious of the risks and take proper precautions, off-trail hiking can give you a new level of outdoor enjoyment. The hike in this story is best done in June, but with all the rain and extra water in the creeks this year, it would probably be a good July hike, too.

Bob and Rick had planned to meet at the Hunting Hollow entrance at 6 a.m., but they both pulled in at about 6:15. Bob parked his car, squeezed his big daypack into the tiny trunk of Rick's sporty roadster convertible, and settled into the passenger seat. They headed out for the trip up to park headquarters.

The trip would have taken most drivers an hour or more, but they got there in 50 minutes. The morning was already pretty warm, but it *was* mid-June, and spring would be over in just three more days.

They went through the clothes in their daypacks and decided to leave some of their warmer stuff behind. Since no one was around, they changed clothes in the parking lot. Bob slipped into his nylon pants with the zip-off legs and then zipped off the legs to make the pants into shorts. Rick put on his red, yellow, and blue Adidas swim shorts, and they both put on light-colored T-shirts. Bob already had his running shoes on, and Rick put on his brand new all-terrain wading shoes. With their somewhat lightened packs, they set off down the Corral Trail.

Knowing the clothes they were wearing and where they parked their cars, you might have figured out their plan for the day. They were going to hike from headquarters all the way to Hunting Hollow . . . the wet way.

Long-time hiking buddies, they'd hiked most of the trails and fire roads on the west and south sides of the park and had even backpacked as far as the Robinson Canyon in the Orestimba Wilderness, but they'd never intentionally gone off-trail. Some of the trails they'd hiked had seemed off-trail though. A few years back, a ranger had explained to them that a trail or a road could be marked on the map as "obscure" for two reasons. It could be a trail or road that had become obscured by overgrowth or a cross-country route people had used to get from one place to another without benefit of a trail.

At the end of the Corral Trail, they took the road out to Manzanita Point. The Springs Trail or the Forest Trail might

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Another predator for deer to worry about!!

Promotions and other staffing changes at Coe Park

Moonlight hike planned for August

Invitation to become a uniformed volunteer

. . . and more!

have been more interesting, but they wanted to get to the creek as quickly as possible. When they were about a mile down the China Hole Trail, they got their first view of the Coyote Creek canyon, their destination, and they both felt a small tingle of excitement.

It was almost 9 o'clock before Rick and Bob reached China Hole. The air was a little cool in the canyon, but the radiant heat of the sun made them quite comfortable. They got as far as the mouth of Madrone Soda Springs Canyon with dry feet. Then Rick crossed the stream by wading right in, while Bob hopped rocks to keep his feet dry. Bob kept on hopping for about a hundred yards or so before he gave up and started walking right down the middle of the creek.

As they rounded a bend in the creek, a white duck with dark wing tips and a green head flew a few feet over their heads. Rick asked, "What was that?"

"A common merganser," Bob replied. "They're pretty common along the creeks around here." Bob had his Bachelor's degree in biology and had just started on his Master's degree in wildlife management, and Rick was always asking him questions about the plants and animals they saw when they were out hiking.

As they rounded another bend, they saw another duck swimming in a large pool. This was a gray bird with a red head. Rick asked Bob what kind of duck this was, and Bob replied, "A common merganser."

"What? It can't be," Rick said. "This bird has a gray body and a red head. The bird that flew over us back there was white with a green head. Would the real merganser please stand up?"

"They're both mergansers," Bob assured him. "The first one was a male, and this one is a female. Common mergansers are sexually dimorphic."

Rick replied, "That would mean different looking, I suspect."

As they watched the female merganser, a dozen little red-headed gray ducklings with white splotches on their backs swam out from behind some vegetation at the edge of the creek. "More dimorphs, I presume," whispered Rick.

"Yep," Bob answered, "baby mergansers. Look at how the white markings on their backs make them almost disappear in the speckled sunlight coming through the alders."

As the ducks moved downstream, Rick tossed his pack on the sandy west bank of the creek, pulled off his T-shirt, jumped into the pool, and started swimming around. "Nice pool, Bob," he announced. "Come on in. It's over my head. Must be six feet deep. And, hey, remember when you come in, whatever you do, don't dive!"

"Don't dive? Why not?" Bob asked.

"Because," Rick replied with a grin, "it's against the law to dive 'in the state park system!'"

After a short refreshing swim, the two headed downstream again. About a mile farther along, they found a nice pool, settled down on a rock overlooking the water, and ate their lunches in companionable silence. After about five minutes, the still pool came back to life.

Rick whispered, "Wow, look at those two trout. They must be fifteen inches long!"

Bob whispered back, "Actually, they aren't trout. They're Sacramento pike minnows. They used to be called squawfish, but that name was considered derogatory, so they changed it a few years back. Do you see the fish that just came out from under that rock? *That's* a rainbow trout. See the speckles on its back? And look at the pike minnows. Their tail fins are sort of brownish orange. And see how their tails are more deeply forked than the trout's tail?"

Rick asked, "What other kinds of fish do you think are in this creek?"

Bob replied, "Well, see that rock right over there? Do you see that guy about ten inches long with the suction-cup mouth on the bottom of his head? That's a Sacramento sucker. And all those tiny little fish over there aren't babies at all. They're full grown California roach. I've heard there are sculpins in the creek, too, but I've never seen one, except in books. They're strange looking fish. They're not flat left to right but flat top to bottom. Does that make sense?"

Bob had another thought. "You know, all these fish are natives. I don't think there are any non-native fish in this creek. Well, maybe an occasional black bass or green sunfish, but they don't seem to survive long enough to breed. Before they built the Coyote and Anderson dams, steelhead used to come from the ocean to spawn in this creek. I wonder if salmon ever did?"

As they were retrieving their packs, Rick spotted a small empty clam shell in the sand. "Hey, Bob, look at this little clam shell. It's too small for someone to have had clams for lunch. They must have used a clam for fishing bait."

Bob said, "Hey, let me see that shell. Wow! How neat! I've heard about them, but I've never seen one. It's a native freshwater clam, a California floater, I bet."

Farther downstream they saw a large pool with a big rock sticking out of the water on the east side. "I bet that's the Big Rock Hole we heard about," Rick said softly as they began to sneak up on the pool. With binoculars, they could see three turtles and a medium-sized frog at the pool's edge.

Bob whispered commentary. "Look how much those turtles look like rocks, good camouflage. Hey, I can see the red on the edge of the frog's legs. It's a red-legged frog, for sure. They like slower water, in big pools, like this one. Yellow-legged frogs do well in moving water. Lot of times you can't see what kind of frogs they are because the red or yellow is on the bottom of their legs. Their green color is also good camouflage. By the way, did you know that the little bright green tree frogs, like the one we saw back a ways, can actually change to a brown color in about five or ten minutes?"

Bob pointed to three large fish, and Rick whispered loudly, "My gosh! The biggest one must be eighteen inches long!" He paused and announced, "Well, as far as I'm concerned, you can send those minnows packing down the pike. I'm not going to let this pool go unswimmed."

There wasn't a good way to jump into the pool, so they both just waded in. To their surprise, the big pike minnows started swimming nearby and eventually were swimming around their legs. They spent half an hour swimming with the curious fish. Then Rick emerged from the pool, stretched out on a large flat rock, and started soaking up sunshine while Bob stayed in the water, floating around on his back. Finally Bob got out, and the two continued down the creek.

They found a big, long pool that begged to be swum, but it was getting late, so they hiked on by. Finally they spotted Coit Road on their left and headed straight for it. They had thoroughly enjoyed hiking the creek, but their calves and ankles were ready for a flat surface.

Another 45 minutes walking the road and they were back at Hunting Hollow. They drove to Morgan Hill, picked up a My Masterpiece pizza at the My Pizza place, and drove back up to park headquarters.

Sitting on top of a picnic table behind the blacksmith shop, they ate their pizza and basked in the glow of a fine sunset.

"Hey, Bob, pretty nice day, huh?"

"Yep, Rick, they don't get much better."

For the Love of . . . Coe!

by Stu Nuttall, professed Coe advocate

I unexpectedly ran into Teddy Goodrich, a Coe Park Advocate, who upon hearing an account of pure nature in action asked me to rewind and play for you this account. This backcountry drama, I realized while pedaling back out of the park, would never have happened without a backcountry at all. If you are a regular to Henry Coe, the sights that amaze common folk are just one frame in the sequence of a Coe experience.

Take Wednesday, April 13, 2005, for example:

Frame #1: Seeing an eagle swooping by is an amazing sight. The strength, the agility, the rarity, ... When I discovered Henry Coe State Park 18 years ago, an eagle sighting like that was cause to barge in on whatever my wife was doing to report this important event. Eagles are a relatively common sight in Coe—I actually see them regularly—and so close to home!

Frame #2: Beholding a newborn fawn and its mother is another amazing sight. I have seen such scenes on postcards and calendars. We all pause to revel in this sight whenever the opportunity arises. At this time of year in Henry Coe—a few miles from your doorstep—you can see on a regular basis the great circle of life beginning anew for one of Mother Nature's creatures.

But to behold those frames in their sequence, linked together to see both the great circle of life and how the balance of nature really balances itself!

In one violent action, the eagle swooped in and grabbed the newborn fawn in its talons. Because the eagle did not have a secure hold, the baby was able to kick itself out of the claws of death and fell rolling down the hillside. In an instant, the eagle pulled a barrel roll not more than 30 feet in diameter and came back in for the kill. Mommy to the rescue! The mother deer, not far away, leaped over her baby and reared up thrashing at the eagle. The eagle evaded the hooves with a slight shrug to the left and with an awesome display of power and agility, pulled another barrel roll and swooped in lower than before. The eagle tried to grab its prey from between the mother's feet, mommy shuffled just the right way, and the eagle was forced to pull out of the attack and majestically glide away.

I stood aghast. I stood instructed. I stood feeling humbled. I stood blessed.

A day, a drama, a vignette in the cycle of life in Henry Willard Coe's backcountry. A backcountry so rare, but so tasty to developers, dam builders, railroaders, and even well-intentioned park lovers who want more access to these treasures. To truly love and appreciate this amazing place, we need to advocate—advocate for what? Nothing? No change? Status quo? Yup, that's right. To love it is to leave it. Leave it alone. L.N.T. (leave no trace).

Park News

by Michael Ferry
Supervising Ranger

Spring came and went in the flash of an eye, but not without a splash of color. The wildflowers didn't let us down as they seemed to come out from every nook and cranny of the park. It seemed like yesterday that we were complaining about rain, and then all of a sudden the hills are now beginning to turn golden. However, if you look closely, there are still many wildflowers to be found.

It has been a very busy spring with lots going on, from major staff changes, successful PRA special events, project completions, and park improvements. Let's take a closer look.

First and foremost the biggest news of the spring is that our Monterey District Superintendent will be leaving. Superintendent Phil Jenkins has been offered and has accepted a position as the Division Chief in the Off Highway Vehicle section of the California State Parks. It was a difficult decision for Phil to leave the Monterey District, as he enjoyed all of the parks units within the district. Henry Coe State Park is a special place for Phil—as many of you may know, he lived in the Ranch House as a young boy while his father, Ray Jenkins, was the unit ranger. Phil will be greatly missed, but we wish him well in his new position. His replacement will be announced in the coming months.

The next big news is that Randy Neufeld has been promoted to the Chief of Maintenance of the Gavilan Sector. Randy will now oversee all maintenance functions for Fremont Peak State Park, San Juan Bautista State Historical Park, and Henry Coe State Park. Many have asked what effect this will have on Coe Park. It should have no effect on the maintenance operation as Dave Allred has been assigned as the new Maintenance Supervisor for the Gavilan Sector and will be supervising Coe maintenance operations. If anything, Randy's

promotion and the addition of Dave Allred will help Coe Park in many ways.

We have announced the Heavy Equipment Operator position for Coe, have received numerous applications, and should soon have the position filled. Rumor has it that we have a new road grader waiting for us up in Sacramento that will be available to us as soon as we fill the position.

Other staff changes include Patrick Goodrich being promoted to Senior Park Aid. Congratulations, Patrick!

On April 20, the Monterey District Annual Meeting was held at the Memory Gardens, Pacific House Plaza. Coe Park did very well this year in the recognition awards. Randy Neufeld received the Most Valuable Employee Award and gave a gracious speech thanking many others for their work and acknowledging the team effort. Bob Patrie received his Volunteer Medallion Award and Public Service Award. Bob said to all, it really was not work for him but more just having fun in the park. Barry Breckling presented to Teddy Goodrich the Outstanding Volunteer Award. Teddy has been busy lately with fine-tuning the text for the interpretive panels going in at the Dowdy Ranch and Kickham Ranch. Rick Perez received his 25 Years of Service Award. All had fun at the meeting along with a great barbecue to boot. Congratulations to all!

The spring was filled with not only flowers but wonderful special events. The Backcountry Weekend, April 23 and 24, was a huge success! The new changes to minimize the environmental impacts and reduce the cost of the event worked out well. The new evaluation/comment handouts were well received, and most were turned back in with raving reviews. The Saturday night campfire program hosted by Ranger Cameron Bowers was a big hit with over 150 visitors attending. I would like to say a big thank-you to the Backcountry Weekend Committee for their hard work in the many months leading up to the event.

The Mothers Day Breakfast was another successful event held on Sunday, May 8. As usual this special breakfast was filled to capacity and then some. A special thanks to Everett Allen, Lee Sims, and all those who made this a great event.

We had two successful equestrian events this spring. The first was the Diablo Pistoleros Endurance Ride, hosted by Doug Reynaud, on Saturday, May 7. The second was the classic North American Trail Riders Conference ride hosted by the San Martin Horseman's Association over Memorial Day Weekend. Both events drew over 60 equestrian riders.

The Hunting Hollow 10K run/walk will be held on June 11, and there are currently over 100 participants! A job well done by Ken Howell.

A quick update on the Dowdy Ranch project: The project is nearing completion with the final touches being added. The front solar gate at Bell's Station still needs to be installed, and the visitor center needs to be furnished. We are also hoping to paint the exterior roofing panels a darker color so that they will not reflect so much light and will blend in more with the park setting. I will be holding a meeting with the property owners around the Dowdy to discuss some of the issues they have regarding opening the Dowdy Ranch to the public. There have been some concerns about road safety, trespassing, and poaching, which we hope to address.

The Dowdy Ranch will be staffed with volunteers and a camp host. If anybody is interested in working out at the Dowdy Ranch, please contact me (*mferry@parks.ca.gov*), as I am compiling a list. We will be having a Grand Opening once an opening date has been set.

I hope all of you have a safe and happy summer.

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August 20–21: Burra-Burra Moonlight-Daylight Hike-Hike

by Bill Gingras

The Burra-Burra Moonlight-Daylight Hike-Hike will take place this year on the weekend of August 20 and 21.

The B-B M-D H-H has been a PRA tradition for many years, and takes place in the backcountry of Henry Coe State Park. Attendees of the event can arrive when they want on Saturday, August 20, and spend the afternoon hiking or just relaxing. After dinner, when the sun goes down and the moon rises, we set out on a hike to Burra-Burra peak where we can listen to the night sounds and view what the surrounding landscape looks like under a full moon. You'll be amazed at the dramatic moonlit scene around you, and be as equally amazed by the constant symphony that fills the air, courtesy of the Coe nightlife. The following morning, we repeat the hike and observe the differences between the night sounds and scenes and those in the daytime.

A few details are as follows: Plan to arrive on August 20 after 1 p.m. but no later than 8:30 p.m. Camping for this event is recommended. If you plan to camp, bring your own food (dinner, breakfast, and snacks), drinking water, camping gear, and a chair. Propane-fired BBQ grills will be available.

You must sign up in order to gain access to the backcountry. The number of participants might be limited, so sign up soon. Give me a call at 408/227-5424 (home) or via e-mail at *bgingras@sbcglobal.net* for more information or to sign up, and I will contact you with final details as the weekend draws near.

TFest: Saturday, October 1, 2005
by Rick Leonard

It's time to start thinking about the fall Tarantula Fest. The annual barbecue offers a choice of Santa Maria Style Steak, Marinated Chicken, Gardenburgers, or Hot Dogs. Each meal includes beans (vegetarian or regular), grilled bread, salad, and watermelon. Soda, beer, and wine will be available at nominal prices.

The annual raffle to benefit the Visitor Center Expansion Fund promises to have some wonderful prizes. You will soon be receiving more details about the prizes and raffle tickets in a separate mailing.

The day will be jam packed with interesting events. Park volunteers will lead several Tarantula Walks. The Interpretive Center will be open and filled with interesting exhibits and information. Tarantulas, both native and exotic, will be on display. Are you ready for a photo with a tarantula on your head or shoulder? Snakes, children's art activities, and Smokey the Bear are among some of the other interesting options. While you are at the park, take a walk on one of the many beautiful trails.

Again we are fortunate to have the Tarantula Band to entertain us with a lively and fun selection of music.

Additional information? Contact me at *dadoco7@aol.com.*

Wanted! TFest Raffle Prizes
by Matt Pauly

Once again we are seeking donations for the Tarantula Fest Raffle that takes place on October 1, 2005. It may seem premature to solicit donations this early, but we have found in the past that some businesses and individuals require three to four months to make the necessary arrangements for their donations. Printing tickets and letters to PRA members containing donors' names also requires about two months of lead-time.

If you plan to make a personal donation or if you know of a business that donates to nonprofit organizations like the PRA, please contact me by the first of August.

All contributions to the raffle are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.. Your donation will be listed in the Visitor Center and on our website during the months of August and September. Donors' names will also be displayed in our mailings to about 600 Pine Ridge Association supporters.

If you can assist us in this year's raffle or would like additional information, please contact Matt Pauly at 408/997-1880 or *mtpauly@yahoo.com.*

An Invitation to Join the Uniformed Volunteer Program

Would you like to learn more about Henry W. Coe State Park—its fascinating history, interesting animals, beautiful wildflowers, singing birds? Would you like to share your knowledge with park visitors? Then consider joining approximately 130 others who donate some of their time to assist Coe Park visitors. Consider becoming a uniformed volunteer.

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

There is a series of classes each fall for all new uniformed volunteers. Topics in the next classes include geology, geography, climate, ecosystems, plants, animals, humans in the park, history of the park, being a volunteer, dealing with the public, interpretive techniques, and first aid. The training will be held at the park on eight weekend days from September 10, 2005, through the beginning of December. Some of the training will occur during hikes and a camp-out in the park. Graduation will be held during the annual meeting of the PRA on February 4, 2006.

Applications are available now. August 13 is the deadline for receipt of applications. Applicants will receive a telephone call to set up a short interview, which will be on August 18, 20, or 21 at park headquarters. If you have any questions or if you would like to obtain an application, call the park at 408/779-2728, or visit our web site at *www.CoePark.org.*

New Members through April

by Margaret Mary McBride and Jim Wright

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

Alden Alrich, Morgan Hill
Martin Cheek, Morgan Hill
Elwyn "Woody" Collins, San Jose
Deborah Davis, Oakland
Beverly Filippi, Gilroy
Marie and Stuart Hoffmann, Grass Valley
Fleur Kettmann, Saratoga
Gary Melching, Morgan Hill
Diana Roberts and Chip Curry, San Jose
Mark and Pat Schwartz, San Jose
Gary G. Smith, San Jose
Michael Smith, Watsonville

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

Lace-pod
Thysanocarpus laciniatus
Brassicaceae (Mustard Family)

PRA Calendar

Saturday, June 25: **Coe Mountain Stomp.** This musical event, which is held at Coe Headquarters, features Coe Park's own jug band, the Tarantulas. Music will start at about 5 p.m. and continue (with breaks) until about 9 p.m. Light refreshments will be served free of charge, but donations will be accepted with appreciation to help cover travel expenses for Spider Bob, a band member who will be traveling all the way from San Diego to entertain you. Please call the Visitor Center (408/779-2728) for additional information.

Saturday, August 13: **Deadline to submit applications to become a Uniformed Volunteer.** Uniformed Volunteers play an important role in staffing the Visitor Center and providing interpretive programs to the public. Please see the article on page 6 for more information about the Uniformed Volunteer Program. For information about what a Uniformed Volunteer does, please check out this link on the Coe Park website: *http://www.coepark.org/volprogram.html.*

Saturday, August 20, & Sunday, August 21: **Burra Burra Moonlight/Daylight Hike weekend.** See the article on page 5 for more information and to sign up for the weekend.

Saturday, October 1: **Ninth Annual Fall TarantulaFest and Barbecue.** Please see the articles on page 6 for information on this fun-filled day. 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).

Don't forget!
The Saturday evening programs held at the Coe Park Visitor Center continue through Labor Day weekend.

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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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