The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

Late Spring 2007

From under My Brim

by Barry Breckling

Shorty

Curt was small of stature. He claimed to be 5-foot-4, but, truth be told, he was an inch or so shorter than that. Most of his friends called him Shorty, a nickname he'd tried for years to discourage. Eventually, he gave up, but whenever someone called him Shorty, he felt a tiny twinge of insult.

"Hey Shorty, come on. If you can't keep up, we'll have to leave you behind."

"Yeah, what's the matter, are your legs too short?"

Typically, he hiked ahead of his three hiking buddies because he was in better shape than they were. But he also liked to be in front so that his taller friends wouldn't block his view of the trail. Today, he just wasn't in the mood for hiking.

"I'm not feeling very energetic. Why don't you guys go ahead. I'll just wait here under this oak tree until you get back."

They agreed on the plan, so Curt sat down at the base of the oak and watched his friends head down the trail. He took a couple of deep breaths and looked around. He knew the tree he was leaning against was a valley oak and that the little white-flowered plants covering the ground around the tree were chickweed and miner's lettuce. He was in his third year of college and was majoring in biology.

Still breathing deeply, he inhaled the sweet smell of wildflowers and the deep aroma of the damp musty leaf litter. A pleasant warm spring breeze blew over him, and he drifted off to sleep.

In a half hour or so, he again became aware of spring fragrances and gradually came back into the world. As he opened his eyes and took in his surroundings, he discovered that things had changed. He looked up and realized that he was sitting against the base of a red maid, a plant with beautiful magenta flowers and bright yellow anthers.

"What, a gigantic red maid plant? This can't be!" Curt exclaimed as he jumped to his feet.

Just then a large shadow enveloped him and the flower just above his head, and strong pulsing downdrafts buffeted him. He scrunched down at the base of the plant and peered upward. Descending toward the flower was a gigantic winged dragon. Upon closer inspection, Curt realized that the dragon was actually a butterfly, a California tortoiseshell. A week ago, he'd seen a bunch of them. But they'd been substantially

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smaller! He'd read in *Butterflies through Binoculars* that these tortoiseshells were uncommon, but that they "erupted" in some years and could be seen in large numbers.

Curt watched as the butterfly landed on the red maid and uncoiled its long slender proboscis. It dabbed the tip of its proboscis into the flower a few times and then quickly fluttered off, leaving Curt's hair a bit disheveled from the strong wind of its wings. Stepping away from the flower to get a better look, he recalled that the flowers were supposed to be about an inch or less wide. And here he was, only slightly taller than this flower was wide. Unbelievable!

A theory he'd come up with while studying wildflowers came back to him. He'd decided that some of the people who'd named plants must have been colorblind. These "red" maids were not red. They were magenta maybe or maybe hot pink, but they were definitely not red.

Suddenly Curt heard a loud rumbling hum. Looking up over his right shoulder, he saw a chubby yellow and black helicopter flying in his direction. When it became apparent that the helicopter was actually a giant bumblebee, Curt instinctively ducked but then straightened back up when he realized that the bee wasn't likely to drag him off and eat him. He also knew that the bee wasn't going to visit the red maid. Despite how attractive red maids are to people, bees aren't interested in red flowers, including flowers close to red (like hot pink or magenta). Bees don't see those colors.

The bumblebee landed on a lavender and white flower growing on a vine that Curt recognized as hillside pea. As he watched, the bumblebee clambered about on the lower part of the flower, weighing it down and creating an opening into the flower's interior. Curt was pretty sure he could hear the sound of the bee slurping up nectar. Although he didn't see the bee pick up pollen, he figured it must have because as it exited the flower the bee had bags of yellow pollen on its legs and some yellow specks on top of his head.

Curt was getting thirsty and also a bit hungry. An idea occurred to him, "Why can't I crawl into one of the flowers and get some nectar? It would probably be as sweet as honey." As he started climbing up one of the vines, another thought occurred to him. "I feel like Jack and the beanstalk. Maybe I'll find golden eggs and then . . . ! Well . . . probably not." Curt finally reached one of the flowers and grabbed the lower petals. When he began pulling himself into the flower, he felt a strong thump on the top of his head and a fine yellow powder filled the air, making him cough and sneeze. He quickly slipped into the center of the flower and found a shimmering bead of nectar. He drank a bit. It was cool, sweet, and satisfying. He backed out of the flower and ruffled pollen out of his hair. Now he knew what it was like to be part of the pollination process.

Curt decided that he should try to make his way back to the car somehow, though he had no idea how he could get into it, much less drive it.

The sky darkened again, but this time from clouds, not insect wings. He noticed that the petals of the red maids were closing up. A few inches down the trail, he found a plant with bright orange petals that were also closing. He recognized the plant as scarlet pimpernel, undoubtedly another plant that was named by a colorblind person. The plant was also called poor man's weathervane because it "disappeared" when rain was likely, or at least when the sky clouded over.

After he'd hiked a few more feet, large raindrops began to crash around him. One hit him squarely on the head, almost knocking him down. He dashed for the nearest plant, a milkmaid as it turned out, and hid as best he could under one of its leaves. As he peered out from under his leaf, the dampened four-petaled flowers began to droop. Inside one of the flowers, he could see six pollen-covered anthers, four long ones and two short ones, surrounding a single pistil in the middle. He realized that the drooping flowers were functioning like the closing petals of other flowers; they were keeping the pollen from being washed away and maybe actually protecting the anthers and pistil. He knew how hard a raindrop could hit!

As he gazed at the soggy petals, it suddenly occurred to him that the drooping white petals look exactly like the droopy white hats Dutch milkmaids used to wear. The name finally made sense to him. And he recalled that flowers with four petals and six anthers, with two shorter than the other four, were in the mustard family. He'd learned that the family included mustard, cabbage, broccoli, turnips, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, and radishes and that all plants in the family were edible. He bit into a leaf and chewed. It was a bit spicy but not bad tasting. It would be his lunch.

Before long, the rain stopped and the sun came back out. Curt continued his trek until a river halted his progress. Hmmm. He rethought his size relative to the river and decided that the stream was actually just a tiny drainage brought on by the rain. He sat down at its edge to think about how he could get across and then spotted a grasshopper on the other side. It was eating, of all things, grass. Suddenly, a lightning-fast tongue flashed out of a gaping green mouth and grabbed the grasshopper. Curt scurried backwards on all fours and hid behind a buttercup plant. "Gosh! I could have been that bug. I could have witnessed the food chain up close and personal!"

As he carefully peered out at the frog, he saw a long, slender shape moving toward it. A gopher snake. It grabbed the frog, and Curt watched in awe as the snake unlatched its jaws and slowly ingested the frog in a movement that might be described as crawling over it. The ingestion process was slow, giving Curt plenty of time to identify the frog. The last parts that disappeared down the snake's mouth were two long, yellow legs.

Even though Curt knew the snake wouldn't be ready to eat again for several days, he snuck quietly away up a steep hill. On top of the hill, he looked back down at the snake. It was still there, but now its mouth was closed, and it had a big lump in its neck, if a snake can be said to have a neck.

Curt took a couple of deep breaths, and his rapidly beating heart slowed down a bit, but it shot right back up when he heard a loud swooshing sound and saw a hawk, the size of a 747, descending purposefully, talons extended. The hawk opened it wings, landed right on top of the snake, made a few adjustments, and flew off, with its rusty-red tail feathers fanned out. Curt fell flat on his back and contemplated the events that might have made him part of the food chain for a second time in one day.

Much more vigilant now, Curt headed carefully downstream. He stopped in his tracks when he noticed a large skull about a foot ahead of him. The sight spooked him, but only because the skull was at least five times taller than he was.

Curt always examined animal skulls when he ran across them. He spent almost an hour crawling around, in and out, and on top of the skull. Inside, he counted teeth. Each side of the upper jaw had three small incisors, one long sharp canine, three slicing premolars, and a single small molar. The teeth on the lower jaw were the same except that they had only two premolars, which would fit snugly alongside the top three to make for scissor-like slicers. "Cat," he thought, "Probably a bobcat. No, it's too big. It's gotta be a mountain lion!" Two of the incisors were chipped, leaving fresh-looking bright white surfaces. The tip of one of the canine teeth was also chipped off, but the chipped area was smooth and had the same tan patina as the rest of the teeth. This was an older break.

On the bone below the left eye, he found a hole almost as big as his head, probably only a quarter inch across in "reality." It would be the size of a 22-caliber bullet. The bone around the bullet hole was like the canine tooth, tan and smooth, so it was also an old injury. He concluded that the lion must have lived a long, tough life.

As he sat cross-legged, chin in hands, on top of the skull, he imagined the lion's life from birth to death. A clumsy little cub, an agile teenager without the best of hunting skills, a much improved adult hunter, a mother licking her newborn cubs, and those hard times with someone shooting at her, and he wondered what misfortune had caused those chipped teeth.

Just as Curt began to climb down from the skull, another shadow flowed over him. When he looked up, all he could see was a huge expanse of brownish-gray fur. And as the shadow slipped on, a long black-tipped tail swished by just over his head. Curt continued to climb down from the skull and then sat on the ground, leaning against the jawbone. "What extraordinary experiences I've had today. I am completely exhausted . . . ."

"Hey, Shorty, wake up! Boy, you sure missed a great hike."

"Yeah, we saw a bunch of neat flowers. You could have told us what they were."

"That's right, there were white ones and yellow ones and a whole bunch of pink ones."

"They weren't pink, they were hot pink."

"I'd call them magenta. Look, there are some of them right over there."

"And after the rain stopped, we saw a hawk with a red tail flying by high above us, and it had a snake in its feet."

"But the best thing we saw was a mountain lion! It ran right across the trail way up in front of us."

"Yeah, that was really cool! Hey Shorty, what did you do while we were gone?"

Curt got up from the base of the big oak tree, pulled out his magnifying lens, and said, "Guys, come 'ere. Come take a close look at these magenta flowers."

"Hey, Shorty, that's really cool. You sure can see a lot with a magnifier. Those pink and white colors are beautiful, and the little bright yellow things, aren't they anthers? And the other little parts are so intricate."

"Lemme see."

"Well, Shorty, I guess a guy with your stature finds it easy to see these little details."

"Hey, Shorty, you've always wanted to see a mountain lion. I bet you wish you'd been with us."

Curt just smiled. Maybe he didn't mind so much being called Shorty anymore.

Great Knockers Spotted at Coe Park!

by Stan Soles

Knockers. I love them! I'll usually go out of my way for a closer look. Knocker, of course, is the informal term that field geologists give to isolated outcrops of rock, such as those that grace the fields and hillsides of Coe Park. The term, no doubt, arose from the tendency of someone so inclined to walk over to an outcrop and knock off a chunk of it for closer scrutiny.

I always like to take side trips to outcrops—never know what you might find. Sometimes an outcrop has been modified in such a way as to provide shelter. Or it might have been quarried for stone, or used as a grindstone. Sometimes outcrops have been used as billboards (of sorts) for petroglyphs or more contemporary graffiti. But most of the time, an outcrop is just a big old rock, and that is just what I was looking for during my latest adventure in Coe Park. Only I was interested in a particular type of rock—blueschist.

Maybe you have seen some yourself, if you have been out and about in the park. Blueschist is composed of very fine layers of small, flat, or elongated crystals, at times almost appearing fibrous, and it's blue in color. The blue color is due to the presence of the mineral glaucophane. The name glaucophane is from two Greek words meaning *bluish* and *to appear.* Glaucophane only occurs in metamorphic rocks (rocks that have been altered by heat and pressure), typically in areas that have experienced relatively low temperature and moderately high pressure metamorphism. These kinds of metamorphic conditions occur in tectonic subduction zones, and Coe Park is sitting smack-dab on an old subduction zone! For millions of years, the floor of the Pacific Ocean was involved in a head-on collision with North America. Vast quantities of marine sediments were scraped off or dragged under the Pacific plate as it subducted under the North American continent. The sediments that were dragged into the subduction zone experienced varying degrees of metamorphism. Some of the metamorphosed material, through a variety of complex processes, was eventually exposed in the Coast Range—as knockers.

My blueschist safari involved a three-day jaunt through Red Creek. It was a swell trip. The views were superb, the weather was beautiful, and the park was just a delight in its winter cloak. I spotted five magnificent tule elk and a bald eagle, and I sure saw some great rock outcrops, but no outcroppings of blueschist. Oh well, maybe next time. But no matter how nice a walk in the woods is, it's always nice to come home—see the Mrs., nice hot shower, home-cooked meal, and the familiarity of one's own bed.

When I walked in the front door at home, my wife asked, "How was your trip?" "Great," I replied, "I saw some awesome knockers . . . ." On the bright side of things, the couch is much more comfortable than my sleeping bag.

Green Rattlesnakes!?!

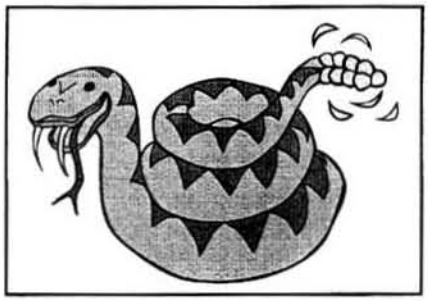
by Ranger Sheryl Neufeld
Gavilan Sector

Relocating rattlesnakes—something they don't teach you in the Ranger academy. Fortunately, I love reptiles and have a great appreciation for our venomous park inhabitant.

I first learned how to use a snake catcher as a Park Aide in Sonoma. The Rangers gave me a stick and a garbage can and said "this is how you do it." A snake stick is a longer version of a litter picker-upper. I had a lot of fun responding to a report of a rattlesnake. I kept the visitors at a safe distance as I picked up the snake, put it in the garbage can, and drove it into the backcountry.

We have the Western Rattlesnake here in California (*Crotalus viridis*). There are many subspecies. I grew up in Santa Cruz where the rattlesnakes were mostly brown. In Sonoma they were brown, too. Then I became a Ranger in the Angeles District. In Southern California they had the Southern Pacific subspecies. This snake could get almost completely black in color, and it had a temper much worse than the ones I had dealt with up north (LA can do this to you). Still, through all the hissing, striking, and rattling, I relocated well into the hundreds of the Southern Pacific in my eight years down there. When I transferred back north again, I hit a dry spell. No rattlesnake relocating for four years! In fact I saw only one rattlesnake in four years. It was at Fremont Peak State Park and was in a safe area away from the public. I just watched it slither away under a large log.

The last several months I have been working at Henry Coe State Park. I was in the visitor center when a gentleman came in and said "there is a snake in the parking lot, and I think it might be a rattlesnake." The volunteers all turned in unison and looked at me. I was so excited; could it really be a rattlesnake? Yes, it was! It had moved into the corner of the barn and was still very close to the public. I found a makeshift snake stick that was a pole with a hook. The snake slipped through the hook many times. One time it went back out into the parking lot. The sun shined on it, and I was so surprised, **"it's a green rattlesnake!"** I have never seen a green rattlesnake before. It was a beautiful olive color. It was the most docile rattlesnake I have ever relocated. It didn't hiss or rattle once!



Over the next few days I told everybody about my green snake. I came to learn that the legend of the green rattlesnake has been talked about at Henry Coe for many years. It is a contro-

versial subject, since many people haven't seen one, while others have. I feel so lucky to have had my first relocation in four years open up a whole new rattlesnake chapter for me. Could it be that Coe has its own subspecies living within the park boundaries? I look forward to exploring the green rattlesnake mystery more. Hopefully, next time I will have a camera!

Hike to Cordoza Ridge

by Ranger John Verhoeven

Have you ever looked at a place that seemed so much closer than it really is? Cordoza Ridge at Henry Coe Park, named after the Cordoza family who first homesteaded the land in 1883, is that ridge you may have seen looking southwest from headquarters. Cordoza ridge looks so close with its inviting oak woodlands and green grass in the winter and spring. The only catch, of course, is how do you get over there?

On a beautiful Sunday in the winter this year, I joined several volunteers, Rob Glover, Larry Haimowitz, and Libby Vincent, on a cross-country hike to mark a proposed trail route to connect Cordoza Ridge in the Lakeview portion of the park to trails near headquarters. As you look down into Soda Springs canyon, you get a feeling of how high up you are. The canyon is quite a drop in elevation at about 1,000' down from headquarters followed by a 1,000' elevation gain to reach Cordoza ridge. I knew the hike would entail more climbing than that quick assessment since we are trying to create a route suitable for a trail. We would be tracing and retracing our steps to find the best route to mark.

Barry Breckling, our encyclopedic source of information regarding the park, drew for us a route he envisioned on a map, even detailing places where he had seen unusual plants. The group embarked on the Corral trail to a meadow on Pine Ridge at the junction of the Springs trail, and we started down the slope off trail towards Lion Spring. Our group traversed the slope trying to find the best route for a trail with Rob leaving flags to mark our best consensus. Just before we reached Lion Spring, we encountered some old trash, a steel dinner plate, perhaps a remnant from a long gone encampment, or maybe it fell from a horse rider's pannier, traveling through the area. Another question to ask Barry or Teddy Goodrich, our park historian.

At Lion Spring, Larry showed the group some of the Native American bedrock mortars in the rocks just above the springs. We took a short break in the shade then headed south along the ridge, the angle of the slope increased dramatically. We were still hundreds of feet above the creek. Through the bay trees we went until we encountered a small clearing at what appeared to be an old road cut. The road itself basically went straight down to the canyon bottom at such an angle surely that the only vehicle that could drive on it would be a bull-

Many ladybugs!

dozer. The slope had to be about at a 45° angle. Looking along the slope, there were no easy ways to envision building a trail.

While Rob, Libby, and I contemplated which way to go, Larry was traveling north in the hope of finding an easier way down, which he did. Rob, Libby, and I took the road down to the creek that felt like a black diamond mogul run. I leaped down the hill a few times landing in the soft soil and leaf litter from the oak trees. The slope never relented until reaching the canyon bottom.

The group reconvened at a pretty spot in the canyon where "Ball" canyon and Soda Springs canyon meet. Larry and Libby had already picked up a couple of balls that had undoubtedly rolled down from the campground at headquarters. The sun was peeking in and out of the clouds as we ate. The wind rustling tree leaves was about the only noise in this place aside from us. Many of the trees were covered with carpets of moss, as were the stream stones.

After lunch the group traveled down the stream about ¾ of a mile before embarking on the climb to the top of the ridge. The ground was quite moist, and traveling was quite easy save for a few logs that had fallen across the stream. One of the highlights of the stream was a large concentration of wintering ladybugs. I heard a leaf crackling sound at my feet after crossing a log and looked down to see hundreds if not thousands of ladybugs. There were so many it was difficult to avoid stepping on them!

After enjoying the streambed, it was time to start the climb up to the ridge. Saying the hill was steep is an understatement. As we climbed we encountered an old wagon road that was used to reach an old resort in the Soda Springs canyon. The road goes all the way down to Gilroy Hot Springs and was in quite good condition since the ranchers who owned the land before State Parks had kept it maintained. We followed the road, which was a relief from the climb, up to the border of the park. Once at the gate on the road, we followed the fence line, which was very steep. The hillside had many clumps of native grasses among the gray pines and oak trees, which basically held the soil from sliding down the hill.

The only relief from the climb came when we reached the road on the top of Cordoza Ridge. The climb was worth every drop of sweat as we leisurely walked along the ridge. You could tell by the condition of the road that people don't visit this place. Grass was growing where the tire treads are, and branches that fell from the oak trees were unmoved from where they fell. Larry even found a rock with a beautiful shell fossil in it, probably transported to the road from another location, he thought. We secured the fossil and enjoyed the view of headquarters.

Looking about at all the open space, you could picture yourself one of those homesteaders happy to see the green grass carpeting the hills for your cattle. Or you could be a traveler taking a bumpy wagon ride to the Madrone Soda Springs Resort, vacationing from the Bay Area. Or maybe you are a Native American traveling on foot to a seasonal settlement to grind acorns for leaching. The place and view seemed timeless to me, removed from modern life. We walked along the ridge considering other ways up to the ridge from the canyon.

Without speaking, all of us knew we weren't going back to headquarters the same way we came to Cordoza Ridge. Our route back used East Dunne Ave. with a nice gradual climb back to headquarters. While walking back, we talked about our findings to connect headquarters with Cordoza Ridge and felt we were closer to a solution. Rob had carefully flagged the route for another time so we could further refine the route.

Back at headquarters, I revisited that tantalizingly close ridge and still felt that desire to be over there again, or to hear those ladybugs again with their tiny feet making such a large sound. I wanted to feel that sense of accomplishment from a good climb again, and imagine the voices from the past, and envision visitors hiking on Cordoza Ridge for the day. For another day, it is time to drive home.

Here's the Rest of the Story
by Teddy Goodrich

The "wrecking ball" in John Verhoeven's article (*The Ponderosa*, Early Spring 2007) is actually a buoy used by the United States during World War II. The buoys were manufactured for the War Department in Clearfield, Utah, and were made out of 3/8", preformed steel plates. They were used to hold up anti-submarine nets at the entrance to U.S. harbors during the war.

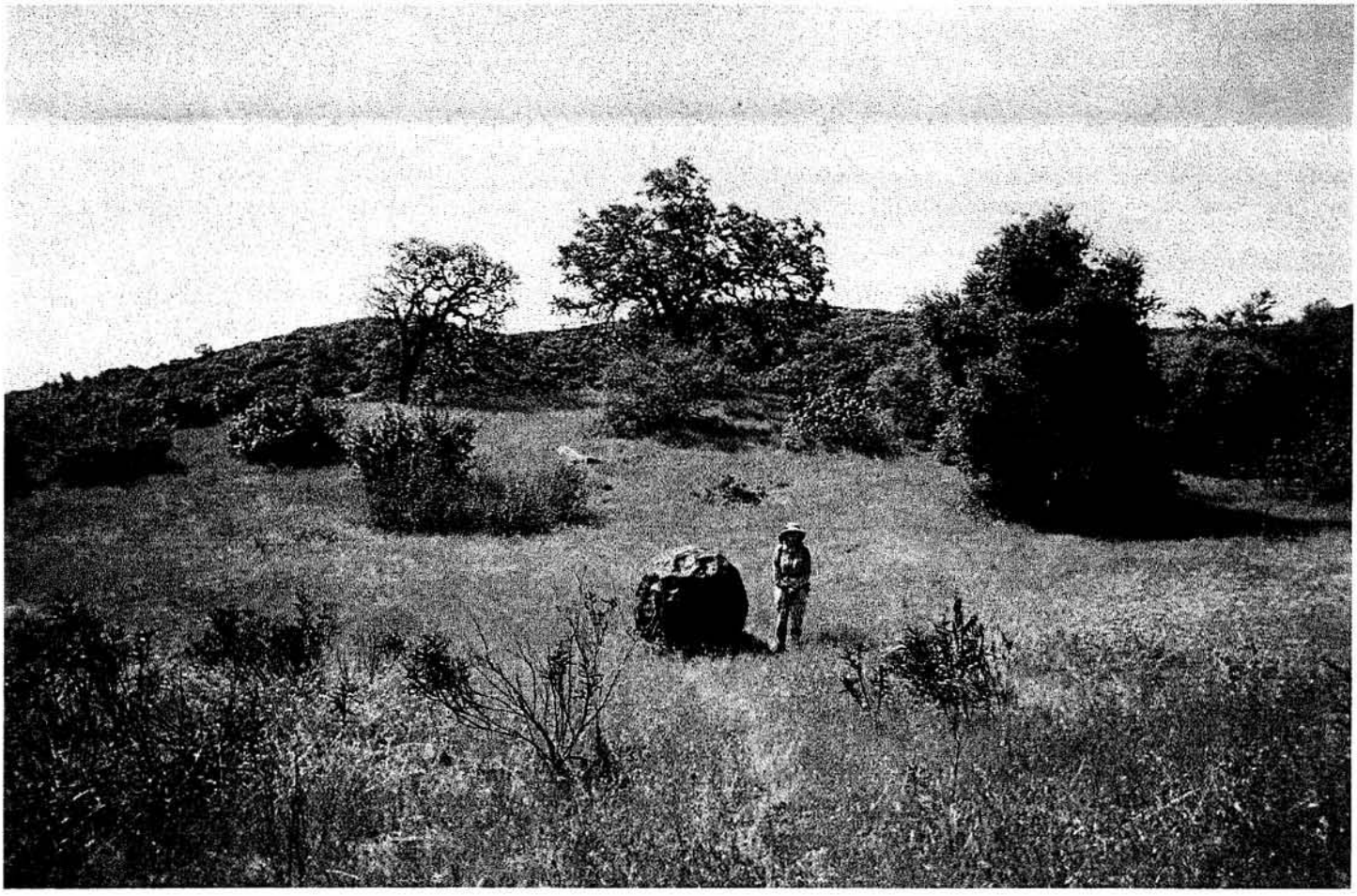
At the end of the war, at least 1,500 of these buoys remained unused, and they were purchased by the owner of a junk yard near Turlock, California, for $5 each. This junk dealer turned a handsome profit, selling them to farmers for $300 each. The buoys held 440 gallons of water, and farmers used them to store water.

Frank Coit, who was from the San Joaquin valley, seems to have purchased at least one of these buoys to clear out brush. Steel plates could be welded onto the buoy, a cable attached to the plate, and, filled with water, the buoy could be dragged by a tractor or bulldozer to clear brush. Two buoys, dragged in tandem, were even more effective—and that's the rest of the story!

Jack Sturla called me with this information the day the story appeared in the last issue of *The Ponderosa*. It seems he, too, was the owner of one of the buoys.

Park News
by Michael Ferry
Supervising Ranger

Hello folks, spring is upon us and so is the busy season for Coe Park. Early wildflower reports are coming in with promise despite the little rain this last winter/spring. We had only three days of measurable precipitation in March. This is both good and bad news for the park. It looks like our roads and trails will be in good shape this year. We have had few reports of fallen trees and wash-outs. This is a well-needed break for our trails and roads, as we are still clearing trees from last winter. However, it looks like the fire danger could



be quite high this summer. Regardless, we have lots to look forward to for the season.

The big news for the spring is the grand opening of the Dowdy Ranch Day-Use facility accessed from the Bell Station entrance off of Hwy 152. The date is set for Saturday, May 19, with ceremonies beginning at 11 a.m. There has been much interest in this planned event, and we expect a large turnout of guests. Expect to see old friends from Coe's past such as Kay Robinson, retired Gavilan District Superintendent, and public officials such as State Senator Elaine Alquist.

The next big news is Barry Breckling's retirement party. After almost thirty years at the helm of Henry W. Coe State Park, Ranger Barry is saying goodbye. The send off party is shaping up to be a grand one. All are invited for this party! Our farewell dinner will be held June 9, 2007, 3 p.m., at Coyote Hills Golf Club, 1 Coyote Creek Golf Drive, San Jose. Ranger Cameron Bowers is in charge of the party, *cbowe @parks.ca.gov,* 408/846-8164, P.O. Box 1686, Gilroy 95020. Tickets are $35 for dinner, with gift contributions accepted separately. Don't forget to pick up a copy Barry's Wildflower Book now on sale at the Visitor Center. This new publication is receiving rave reviews.

Some more fun news is in reference to the Gilroy Hot Springs. Teddy Goodrich and Cameron Bowers are providing tours of the hot springs to the public this spring. This is a wonderful opportunity to see and learn about the history of this special place. The tours will be offered on an as-requested basis and can be arranged through Cameron Bowers (see above contact info) or by contacting Teddy Goodrich (408/842-3926).

Staff changes are always news in the sector. Unfortunately the Gavilan sector lost its Environmental Scientist, Amy Palkovic. Amy has taken the new Environmental Scientist position in the Monterey Sector. Amy was a pleasure to work with and will be missed by all. Good Luck, Amy! Currently we are advertising Amy's position statewide and receiving lots of interest. Also, expect to see some new park aides up at Coe HQ this summer, as we are currently hiring to back-fill Mason Hyland's position as Mason will be working weekends out at the Dowdy Ranch.

That's about it for now. Hope to see all of you at the Backcountry Weekend and the Mother's Day Breakfast. Have a safe and exciting summer.

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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 24. Past President Ann Briggs 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 before turning the meeting over to the new president. The officers of the Board of Directors for 2007 are: Bob Patrie, President; Kevin Gilmartin, Vice-President; Winslow Briggs, Secretary; and Dan McCranie, Treasurer. The other board members are Ann Briggs, Barbara Bessey, Ross Campbell, Ron Erskine, and Priscilla Campbell (Chair of the Uniformed Volunteer Committee). Bob Patrie summarized the mission of the PRA, and he, Barbara Bessey, and Ron Erskine described the various projects that the Board has funded that were recently completed (e.g., the outdoor maps for headquarters, Hunting Hollow, the Kickham Ranch, and the Dowdy), currently ongoing projects (e.g., Coe Connections program for school children, the annual events in the park such as the TarantulaFest, Coe Backcountry Weekend, Mother's Day Breakfast, and the Hunting Hollow Run/Walk), or new projects that are just starting up (e.g., Barry Breckling's spiral-bound book on wildflowers, a to-be-produced video presentation entitled "Horses, History, and Hoof Prints"). The PRA members were reminded that the board welcomes applications for funding of projects that fit within the association's mission.

Dan McCranie presented a preliminary financial report for fiscal year 2006. The Association's financial health continued to grow through 2006. The total equity held by the PRA was over $495,000; this represented a growth of nine percent. Donations and dues were up 12 percent over 2005; however, Visitor Center sales were down by six percent from the previous year. The revenues from some of the PRA-sponsored events such as the Backcountry Weekend and the Hunting Hollow Run/Walk were extremely good. The net income for the year was $41,000; this compares well with a net income of $24,000 in 2005.

Winslow Briggs described Park Advocacy Day, which took place on March 26 in Sacramento. He and Ann attended the event last year, and he said that they found that it was extremely informative and the day gave many opportunities to talk with State legislators about topics relating to state parks. He encouraged PRA members to attend.

Ann Briggs briefly summarized the status of the efforts to expand and remodel the Visitor Center—a project that has been ongoing for almost 15 years. She indicated that work on this project was expected to pick up during this year.

The meeting of the PRA uniformed volunteers followed, chaired by Priscilla Campbell. She introduced the other members of the Uniformed Volunteer Committee: Dan McCranie (Vice Chair), Jim Brady, Linda Keahey, Rick Leonard, and

Bonnie Stromberg. The number of active uniformed volunteers is now about 125.

In 2006, volunteers donated more than 17,000 hours, which is more than eight full-time equivalent paid employees! Of this total, 4,000 hours were spent staffing the Visitor Center, and another 1,800 hours were donated to provide interpretive programs or other services for the public. This is an amazingly large number of hours. The volunteers were extremely active during 2006, as evidenced by the number of award presentations that followed.

Twelve individuals who completed the requirements of the training program are: Carrie Britton, Miles Britton, Mavis Ellis, Greg Lee, Mary Little, Ed Nagel, Dick Rawson, Karen Reed, Michael Sanchez, Mike Slattery, Sharon Slattery, and Gena Zolotar.

Four Trainees who served 50 or more hours beyond the training program advanced to Volunteer status: Ken Hulick, Rosemary Schmidt, Stan Soles, and Chris Turner.

Three individuals who had volunteered 250 or more hours of which at least 100 hours were spent in the Visitor Center were promoted to Senior Volunteer: Diana Maloney, Dave Thompson, and Paul Yellowhorse.

A tool containing a compass, magnifying glass, and several other items, which was engraved with the PRA logo to honor the recipients of the 2006 Visitor Service Award, were 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). Forty-six individuals were recognized in this category: Everett Allen, Einar Anderson, Chere Bargar, Barbara Bessey, Jim Brady, Ann Briggs, Winslow Briggs, Victor Bubbett, Priscilla Campbell, Ross Campbell, Pat Dallam, Bonnie Doran, Darryl Dubois, Stew Eastman, Bill Frazer, Kevin Gilmartin, Rob Glover, Mike Harper, Lucy Henderson, Don Holmes, David Hornby, Ken Howell, Ken Hulick, Jodie Keahey, Linda Keahey, Rick Leonard, Daniel Lewis, Jim Mansel, Karen Mansel, Dan McCranie, Matt Pauly, Lois Phillips, Don Savant, Pat Scharfe, Greg Scott, Martie Sinclaire, Toni Sousa, Dan Straus, Bonnie Stromberg, Kitty Swindle, Nancy Thomas, Dave Thompson, Bev VanderWeide, Libby Vincent, Sandy Voechting, and Bill Workman.

Ten volunteers received special recognition for the tremendous numbers of hours they have spent on Coe Park volunteer activities over the years. Between them, they have donated almost 25,000 hours to the park! Michael Brookman, Stephanie Charles, and Ron Erskine each volunteered at least 1,000 hours of service. David Hornby, Karen Mansel, Dan McCranie, Matt Pauly, Bonnie Stromberg, and Bill Workman each volunteered at least 2,000 hours of service. And Everett Allen volunteered over 9,000 hours of service!

A special silver pin with the association's logo was presented to those individuals who have participated in the uniformed volunteer program for ten or more years. Four individuals were so honored this year: Mike Meyer, Don Savant, Lisa Thornquist, and Laura Welch.

A special gold pin with the association's logo was presented to those individuals who have participated in the uniformed volunteer program for twenty or more years. One individual was so honored this year: Chere Bargar.

Ranger Barry Breckling 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-three individuals received the award this year: Everett Allen, Chere Bargar, Joseph Belli, Barbara Bessey, Jim Brady, Ann Briggs, Winslow Briggs, Priscilla Campbell, Stephanie Charles, Ruby Domino, Darryl Dubois, Stew Eastman, Bill Frazer, Kevin Gilmartin, Rob Glover, Teddy Goodrich, Don Holmes, Ken Howell, Jodie Keahey, Linda Keahey, Rick Leonard, Bill Levey, Daniel Lewis, Dan McCranie, Mike Meyer, Sam Parker, Bob Patrie, Matt Pauly,

Martie Sinclaire, Bonnie Stromberg, Kitty Swindle, Libby Vincent, and Bill Workman.

Barry Breckling presented the Uniformed Volunteer Committee's Golden Bear Award for exceptional service to **Rob Glover.** Rob started his training to become a Uniformed Volunteer in 1999. He volunteered more than 250 hours in 2006; he has volunteered 1,644 hours since he joined the Volunteer Program, and 447 of these were spent in the Visitor Center. He has done a lot of trail work, including the Fall and Spring Trail Days at Coe Park. He has worked at the Coe Back-Country Weekend and the TarantulaFest. He has also agreed to take over responsibility for the Coe website when the current webmaster retires.

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 Ann Briggs and Winslow Briggs, went to two individuals—**Stew Eastman and Libby Vincent.** Between the two of them, they have volunteered more than 7,200 hours. Both have been involved with the Uniformed Volunteer program for more than 14 years and have been involved in a wide variety of park activities, and both had received the Uniformed Volunteer Committee's Golden Bear award for exceptional service. Stew became a Uniformed Volunteer in 1993. He served on the Volunteer Committee for many years and was Chair of the committee for two years. He also served as the coordinator for new volunteer training, he led hikes for school groups, carried out many foot patrols, and worked at the Coe Backcountry Weekends. He also wrote the interpretive pamphlet for the Forest Trail. At the end of 2006, he had volunteered 3,662 hours, of which 793 were spent in the Visitor Center. Libby joined the Uniformed Volunteers in 1992. She served on the PRA Board of Directors for a number of years and was Vice President for two years. She staffed the Hunting Hollow entrance and led discovery hikes from both Hunting Hollow and the Coe Headquarters, and she led discovery hikes and walks during the Coe Backcountry Weekends. She also wrote articles for the newsletters for the Pine Ridge Association and for the Uniformed Volunteers. She received a special award from Coe's State Park District Office in 1999. At the end of 2006, she had volunteered 3,550 hours, of which 692 were spent in the Visitor Center.

Michael Ferry, the Supervising Ranger for Coe Park, announced the recipient of the State's Most Valuable Volunteer Award for 2006. This year's award went to **Don Irving.** He spent numerous hours developing plans for acquiring radios for Coe volunteers and making presentations to the PRA Board and to state staff to present the plans. Once the plans were approved, he also provided training to volunteers who wanted to operate the new radios during park patrols.

Michael also acknowledged the tremendous efforts made by individuals who assumed a leadership role on one or more of the park's events during the year: Rita Gormley (provided First Aid), Kitty Swindle and Chere Bargar (Mounted Assistance Unit), Rob Glover (Trail Days), Ruby Domino (Springs Committee), Rosemary Rideout (backcountry artist paint day), Michael Brookman (Team Challenge), Diana Maloney (Coe Backcountry Weekend), Stephanie Charles (Mother's Day Breakfast), Don Holmes (Gavilan College hike), Ken Howell (Hunting Hollow Run/Walk), Celia McCormack (Landmark Volunteers program), Bill Gringas (Burra Burra hike weekend), Rick Leonard (TarantulaFest), and Marsha and Greg Linden (Coe Thanksgiving Saturday).

A delicious lunch was provided at the end of the meeting; special thanks to Kitty Swindle, Chere Bargar, Margo Bennett (created the table centerpieces), Jodie Keahey, Linda Keahey, Greg Linden, Marcia Linden, Lois Phillips, Rosemary Schmidt, Diane Scariot, Sandy Voechting, and Laura Welch. A good time was had by all!

Congratulations to all!

Marijuana: Public Lands under Threat

Supervising Ranger Michael Ferry was the speaker at this year's annual meeting. He spoke about the threat of marijuana growing on public lands. In 2005, Michael spent three months as part of the Campaign Against Marijuana Planting (CAMP), and his fascinating talk and slide show were about those experiences. Marijuana is the largest cash crop in the country, exceeding even crops like sorghum and other heartland staples. Because of California's good climate, it tops the nation in marijuana production. Santa Clara County is tenth in the state in terms of marijuana production.

It is this latter fact that is of concern to Michael and to other law enforcement officials. He indicated that a lot of marijuana is grown on public lands, including state parks, county parks, and open space preserves. Marijuana cultivation generally has a negative impact on the environment, as pesticides and fertilizers are used, which can pollute the water supplies. In addition, water ways may be diverted, which further harms the ecosystem. Michael also noted that there are safety concerns, as growers tend to be armed and dangerous, and hikers sometimes inadvertently stumble into the growing areas.

Michael then introduced Deputy Devin Fontana, who is a member of the Marijuana Detection and Eradication Team in Santa Clara County. Deputy Fontana indicated that 130,000 marijuana plants were eradicated in the county in 2005. He told his captivated audience that, should they discover marijuana growing in a park, they should note where they are so that the plot can be marked on a map and note anything else that they see about the site but then leave the area and notify law enforcement or park rangers as soon as possible.

What's New on the Coe Park Website?

Check out the Coe Park website if you haven't done so in a while. The home page now has a link to the Coe merchandise available for sale at the California State Parks Store. So, if you would like to purchase a book or a map or a brochure, and you don't want to wait until your next visit to the park, you can now order the items online.

Also note that there is a list of flowers that have recently been seen in bloom, along with their pictures, to facilitate their identification.

And, while the information about what springs have water in them was already available on the website, it is a good idea to check the Backcountry Water Report when you plan to spend time in the backcountry of the park.

New Members through February

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!

Karl Doll, Sunnyvale
Greg Lee, Santa Clara
Michael & Rosanne Manning, Redwood City
Chere Montgomery, Morgan Hill
Herbert E. Nagel, Gilroy
Tina Nunes & Rich Ober, Sunnyvale
David Ohlson & Susanne Lee, Morgan Hill
Dave Olson, Palo Alto
Sherry Padgett, Sunnyvale
Jennifer Renz, Santa Clara
John W. Scherrer, Gilroy
Sigal Tzoore, Palo Alto
Larry Voss, San Jose

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, April 21: **Earth Day Trail Day at Coe Park.** This year a special Trail Day will be held on Earth Day. We were pleased that the new trail tools were generously provided by the California State Parks Foundation. If you would like to participate, please call Randy Neufeld (831/623-1655) or Cameron Bowers (408/846-8164) for additional information.

Friday–Sunday, April 27–29: **Coe Backcountry Weekend.** This very popular event is now **sold out**. This year's event will again offer backpacking on Friday night, and the gates will open earlier on Saturday and Sunday mornings. For up-to-date information about the event, including what would happen should rain threaten that weekend, check out our website: *www.coepark.org/orestimba.html.*

Sunday, May 13: **Mother's Day Breakfast at Coe Park.** This year's breakfast again will be held at the Ridgeview campsite. Tickets for this event will go on sale at the Visitor Center on April 15. A form for ordering tickets will also be posted on our website in early April. The event sells out very quickly, so get your tickets early! For more information, please call the Visitor Center (408/779-2728).

Saturday, June 9: **Ninth Hunting Hollow 5K/10K Walk and Fun Run.** Join us for a day of fun and great exercise! Last year, more than 200 people participated in the event. To see photos taken at last year's event, please check our website: *http://www.coepark.org/hh-10k.html.* There is an early reservation fee of $25 that ends June 2, so register early. An entry form is now posted on our website.

Wildflower Book for Coe Park Now Available

Ranger Breckling's *Spring Wildflowers of Henry W. Coe State Park and the Inland San Francisco Bay Area* is now available at the park's visitor center for $21.74 plus tax. With their discount, PRA members pay only $20.00 including tax. If you are a PRA member and want to have the book mailed to you, write a check to PRA for $24.50 and send it to PRA, 9100 E. Dunne Ave., Morgan Hill, CA 95037. (Non-member price is $28.00.)

Don't forget about the Spring and Summer Programs at Coe Park:

Nature Hikes at 10:00 a.m. on Saturdays
Evening Programs at 8:00 p.m. on Saturdays
Wildflower Walks at 11:00 a.m. and at 2:00 p.m. on Sundays

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http://www.CoePark.org

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Assistant Editor:	Barry Breckling	
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This Issue's Illustrators:	Dinesh Desai	Kathy Paivinen
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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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