The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

Early Spring 2008

Writing a Coe Park Diary through the Aftermath of a Fire

by Winslow R. Briggs

In the middle of the day on September 3, 2007, a small plume of smoke emerged from behind Blue Ridge. This was to grow into a conflagration that was to consume 47,600 acres, most of it in Henry W. Coe State Park. Started accidentally, it was only with massive backfires that the exhausted firefighters were finally able to stop it. Since the fire was originally thought to be near the Lick Observatory, it was named the Lick Fire.

Was it a catastrophe? Likely some small animals were caught in it and a few larger ones, though to date evidence is scant. Was the area overripe for fire? The answer for much of the burned area is a resounding yes. Dense stands of chamise choked the steep hillsides. Chamise is not called "greasewood" for nothing, as it is highly inflammable. Has fire been a regular visitor? The Bollinger fire in 1961 covered much of the same area. Most of our chaparral stands and inland forests have burned repeatedly through the centuries.

Is fire a regular part of the ecology? Absolutely. Fire has shaped plant communities for millennia. The following provide some of the evidence: There are some plant species whose seeds germinate poorly, if at all, unless heated. Buck brush (*Ceanothus leucodermis),* a common chaparral shrub in the park, has seeds that are stimulated to germinate by a heat shock. Chamise (*Adenostemma fasciculta*), found in dense stands throughout the park, requires not heat but some factor in smoke to induce its seeds to germinate. Consider the bishop pine (*Pinus muricata*), in the Point Reyes National Seashore, or the knobcone pine (*Pinus attenuata*), found in dry areas of Big Basin State Park. Both have cones that hold the seeds tightly until a heat shock induces the scales to separate and release the seeds. Two years after fire swept through groves of bishop pine on the National Seashore some years back, the ground was a veritable lawn of bishop pine seedlings. Clearly these species would not still be with us unless there had been repeated fires over the centuries.

The Lick Fire has provided us with a spectacular natural laboratory to follow the regenerative processes that occur after a fire. What sorts of questions are we addressing? First, what effect did fire intensity have on vegetation recovery? For example, we have chaparral where the leaves were scorched but are still very much in evidence. We have chaparral where charred skeletons still stand starkly on the hillsides, every leaf consumed. And we have chaparral that was literally burned to the ground with only charred stumps protruding a few inches above the blackened soil—real moonscapes. These clearly represent increasing degrees of fire intensity. The groves of blue oak provide another example: In some areas the fire swept through the understory so rapidly that it scarcely charred the trunks, and the leaves remained green. In other areas the fire was slower and more intense, and the leaves are all severely scorched. In still other areas the fire crowned

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. . . and more!

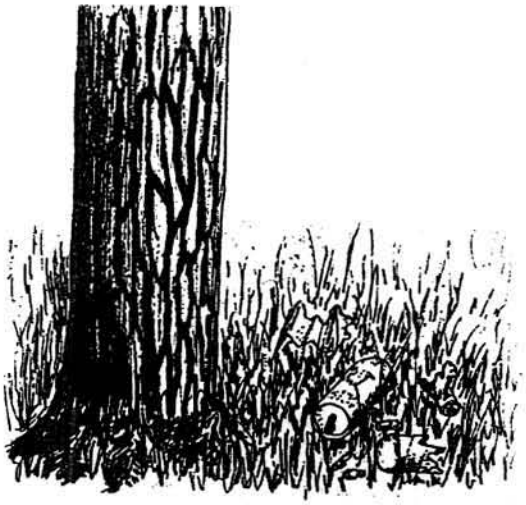
(meaning that it burned to the tops of the trees), and the leaves were all destroyed. We have identified a similar series of gray pine communities. A simple question arises: How much damage does it take to kill a particular tree species or chaparral shrub species?

Since some plant species have seeds that require heat or smoke, we might expect to see some unusual plants appearing the first year after the fire, and we'll be watching for them. These species will be far rarer the second year and may disappear completely the third year. In addition, those of our familiar species that come up the first year with the great infusion of nutrients and nitrogen dropped into the soil by the fire will not come up with the same frequency in the second and third years. How will this change? How will it change as a function of relative fire intensity?

Landsat satellite images provide us with the opportunity to monitor the relative capacity of the landscape to do photosynthesis. How will this change over time? Is the recovery rate different for different plant communities? We will be able to follow the changes with images taken every month or so for the duration of the study.

We have identified 34 study sites for monitoring vegetation changes on the ground and changes in the surrounding trees and shrubs. Each site has five 50 x 50 centimeter quadrats marked out at ten-meter intervals, and each quadrat is to be monitored on at least a monthly basis to record species appearance. Trees and shrubs that have suffered varying degrees of damage will be photographed and monitored for any recovery signs. Some 32 volunteers have been through two or more training sessions and are equipped with cameras and GPS instruments that will allow them to obtain precise records of the many recovery processes. The observations are already beginning, limited only by whether the roads are dry enough for vehicle access.

50 x 50 centimeter quadrat being studied



We are already beginning to see and record things that are happening. Even those charcoal lumps in the moonscape turn out to be chamise lumps that somehow retained some living tissue through what must have been a firestorm. Tiny green shoots are emerging from the charcoal. Some sort of lily (too early to identify) is coming up in profusion in areas that were once solid chamise with no vegetation below their canopy. I have always thought that the massive stands of manzanita at the south end of Blue Ridge were our signature big-berry manzanitas. However, unlike the chamise, big-berry manzanitas don't regenerate from the charred stumps. They can only regenerate from seeds. Nevertheless, some of the burned manzanitas are clearly producing healthy shoots at their bases. Big-berry manzanitas don't have any fine hairs on the young and elongating green stems. By contrast, Eastwood's manzanita has young green shoots literally covered with fine hairs. It doesn't take very close inspection to see that even some of the very large shrubs are Eastwood's and not big-berry manzanitas. Which species will come to dominate this massive stand of manzanita skeletons?

There are going to be many other surprises as the study progresses. Trees and shrubs that appeared severely damaged will nevertheless make it another year. Conversely, trees and shrubs that appeared only partially scorched and currently have some green leaves will nevertheless die. Which species do better? Plants that haven't been seen for decades will make a surprise appearance. Many of the most interesting changes will happen over several years, so we will have to be patient. We expect this study to go on for at least three years, perhaps even longer, so look for future articles in *The Ponderosa*. As fascinating things occur out there, we'll bring you up to date.

Note: As you wander about the park, you will recognize our quadrats by the orange flagging tape. Please stay well away from them to avoid disturbing them in any way!

Lost Trail

by Mike Meyer

That old trail was on the maps. The first map that had it was 1880, a platte map. The trail name was hand-written: "trail from Soda Springs." The squares were numbered in hand-writing. The names of the surveyors were written inside rectangles at the bottom: H. Washington, November 2nd, 1857; Chas. Herrimann, January 9th, 1880; a few others. That first map showed the perfect squaring of the land but also had features written under or above the corners, like "Black Oak," "White Oak," "Tin Can Cabin," and other location points.

There were earlier maps. The 1853 platte map didn't have sections plotted yet, and the old trail wasn't on it. But I don't doubt that it was around then and even before. It connected two unique places that were fairly close, a soda spring and a sulfur spring. The sulfur spring was "discovered" around 1860, the soda spring around the same time. Hotels were built; the old trail was a horse path for guests from San Francisco and Seattle between the two resorts. But those two springs, and the creeks and forests and big rock outcrops, the animals who came and went, everything down to stones on the ground, were important to the people who had come before those times. Those earlier people, those original people, their fathers and mothers and grandfathers and grandmothers thousands of years back, hunted and trapped, and drank out of the creek, and lived in the cool places, the places that had a special feel, a nice lay of the land near water and with oaks—and acorns. Not much is left of their lives. One thing reported by various sources is they looked on the natural world as part of the spiritual world and the universal. That's why I think those two strange springs of warm healing waters would have been special, maybe purification springs, ritual springs. A trail between them was likely.

Bob Patrie had all the maps. He overlaid the platte map from 1880 on the 2006 park map, sent it in an email. When I saw where the trail was on the park map, I couldn't believe. Instead of becoming one of the cattle ranch roads as I'd thought, it criss-crossed the road.

We'd already found most of the trail, we had about six miles of it and were looking for the rest of it, a section approaching the area of the soda springs. It was Greg Lee, Libby Vincent, and me, and this is how it went a few months back when we rode to the ridge in the morning and pulled on our packs and stood a minute to see across the canyon.

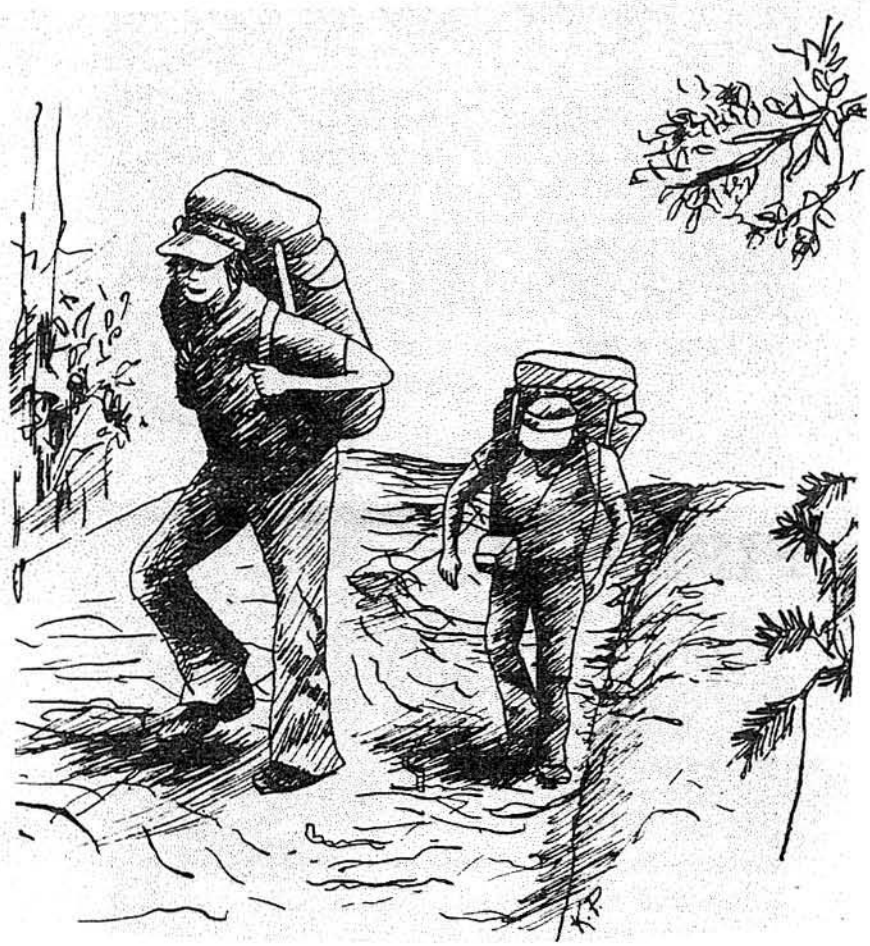
I hate to start all overt like this, but the air was clean and young with the morning, and the space ballooned in front of us to the ridge on the other side. It had the sunlight filtered through thin strands of cloud, and the canyon was deep down, a green trench, and a mile wide. We did not see the creek that was down in there but looked over the hills that went out from us, grass hills with solitary oaks, and the hills went out and down and were full like big waves. Way across was from south to north the opposite ridge with a finger of some low morning clouds stretched from the northwest grazing one of the flanks. The ridge creases sometimes carved deep into the big face, but not always. Your eyes roamed the face of it, eating and drinking, and there were spots where they stopped in curiosity and fascination, a flat place whose treetops were uniformly level, a tract of chaparral on a near-vertical slope like another kind of animal among the trees. The ridge was sculpted with individual ridges that went perpendicular to it, and these were the arms that went down, some bulged and were full and fat, and some went straight and were narrow like an edge. Between them the canyons opened the ridge face, these recesses were greener and inviting. The one across from us, a big canyon in the middle of the big ridge, it ascended from the bottom like a scalpel-cut in flesh, it opened and split into two with a wedge of land and trees jutting up between them near the top. Lots of places to get into and find and see, but we weren't going there, we were headed somewhere north of the big canyon, and we walked into the grass and started down.

There was a swale below the road we came out of then crossed slanting down a hill with an oak with bark that was like corduroy, the trail faint in the grass. We went into some chaparral where there was a another, smaller oak, and the trail was okay through the brush, but in the grass lower down I missed it turning. Greg spotted a pig skull wired to a stump, someone's idea of a cairn, and I went back. We moved off the spine, but then kept walking down when the trail turned again. This trail is only a little used, and this time we missed any old bone to show the way and kept going. At a meadow was a big trunk prone and with no bark and whose wood was dark and grainy, an old mammoth, it seemed familiar, and we passed by and went down and down, but we had lost the trail. We did not go back but went down on a narrow hump over rocky ground and small live oaks and valley oaks with thin trunks that wiggled up with only a branch or two. We kept going down and went between two hills of grass with no trees, and then we could hear the water in the canyon distant, electric like a crowd in a big auditorium before the main event. Our ground was pig pocked but not bad walking, the grass wet, and we went down and down still and then into the trees of the creek, there was an animal trail some little way above the creek, and we walked north until there was a blunt drop of land into the creek, and the path gave out, and we went onto the rocks and boulders. Sunlight was in the canyon, and the water was green and clear, and you could see the gray rocks, but the water did not splash yet and was low in the channel. The opposite side rose like a wall and was thick with trees, and those at the edge had straight trunks and leaned over the water.

We stayed on the rocks, and the sedges were green, and the water strands curled and splayed around them. There were willow stalks and big fallen trees with dead leaves that scratched, and we came on land and off again and then came to the trail we had lost where it emptied into the creek. We

crossed the creek, it was a wide place, Libby first with big splashing strides maybe five of them and running a little to a bar's pebbles and low plants. Then Greg and I, and the trail picked up on that side, just rocks worn down, or maybe the plant things between them shorn so you could follow. At the place where the canyon we had seen from the ridge met the main channel, I heard "the trail goes up there," and Libby pointing into the thick forests of bays and madrones and oaks. We stood a bit on a pebbly beach under the trees, and I saw where the side creek came to the big one, it was like a bar of cement and creek rocks raised above the surface.

I started up the trail, but Greg, who was standing on the edge of the rocky beach, turned a few yards away down the rocks, as if reminded of something he had to go see about. He wandered looking around then turned again and looked into the creek. Then he was leaning over the water, so we went to see, and it was a little salamander orange with big webby hands and yellow eyes a few inches under the wavy surface and on the rocks looking up at him. Four inches of water was moving above him, he in his world, we in ours. I was curious too because Greg had been talking with us before that, so I asked him what made him go down there, but he said he didn't know.



I had been on a shelf across the creek once. I remember it, the ground under the grass when you rubbed it away with your boot was black like coal, and there were rocks around that were burned dark charcoal gray. We had known what it was: two, three thousands of years of people having fires to get warm and cooking and roasting meat dripping. Five thousand years maybe they were there, and not that long ago. I mentioned it to Libby and Greg, how it was just up creek from an open place with shade close around, flat and water nearby, plenty of food around and with a good feeling to the place, a perfect spot. Libby had shown me places like it in the east side of the park, and it is known that people from before stayed in at least a few other locations in Coe. There were even house pits that you could stand in. Libby said how those places always were good spots, places you liked.

Then, when we moved up the rise into the trees on our side of the creek, we found someone had left a rock on the ground near the bank to the little creek. The rock was on the edge of a place with trees leaning over all around, big trees with long trunks that were green with moss and arced over a clearing. The rock was the size of a medium-size pot. The flat grainy surface on one side had an indention worn into it an inch or so deep; now it was filled with moss and leaves. The other thing about this place was that it was flat, and patches of the soil showed through the green covering where the underground animals pushed up mounds. It was black soil. You look around a place like that, on that side of the canyon it was more shady than the other place, really shady and cool and comfy like a room in the forest all green and pretty with friendly plants and trees as the walls. We lingered a few seconds, then went on.

We found the old ranch road. It climbed a few hundred feet in the sun then zigzagged in and out of the canyons. It looped deep in, and it was cold in the canyons, but the road always came almost straight out again, it stayed level following the land into the sunlight. There were pipes under the road at the canyons, you could see the outside part down jutting over the narrow channels down in the trees, but not the inside, that end was always buried. The road would go out from the cold canyons, out into the oaks and grass and sunlight, out all the way to the edge of the mountain then carve across where it flanked, mostly in oaks but sometimes coffeeberry and bays and many green and woody things growing and standing each in itself, and sometimes with large rocks,

cliffs even where you stand and see across the largeness, in the full sunlight the hills even to Blue Ridge where it crested over and began to drop northward. The map told us where the old trail should cross, and I went into the trees to look, Greg GPSed the elevation, Libby went north to look for the next crossing. In the first canyon, the bank off the road was steep, and I looked down through the trees. It was easy to see under them, and I went off the road trying not to look so I could see, but the old trail wasn't there.

Then later when we had not found anything but maybe, maybe, a piece of it a few yards long on the flattish woodland just up from the road, but nothing definitive and the map showing hill when there was canyon, and thinking the old road actually had been laid over the trail and that the difference in map-making between the ages made it look like there were still two things, the road and the trail. We had walked a couple of miles and had eaten our lunches (Libby gave us some sweet pastry dessert from Spain) on the road berm with the trees in spangled light and shadow, and having inspected things like the broken oak whose lower trunk was a knarled pot full of mice droppings, and we were coming back toward those creeky places of the indented rock and the big canyons, then we walked off the road and went up onto a headland jutting over the canyons.

The animals made the trail, and it went across a north slope in the shade through the grass and poison oak branches and some pines, but the path was soon gone. We wandered under the oaks and gray pines in the grass until we were on a place open and nothing but grass, open to the big winter sky, and Greg and Libby always liked those places, and me, too. We climbed some and went around more pines and then came down onto another bigger meadow with not much slope, and we walked out there. There the big canyon was before us, and one of the split canyons to the side where, high up, the trees were laid over the land like a fabric over a body, and you could see them, too, on the top of the next ridge, and they were backlit by the sun, silhouettes in the light. We settled for a spell at the edge of the big meadow where there was a drop and the trees were below so we saw over their tops with a clear panorama before us. It doesn't matter much the details, those sunny slopes close across the canyon spanning 150 degrees, the span of it in grass broadly and now and then creases thick in bays and oaks, it doesn't matter now. Libby said "I don't want to leave this place," and the thought in me was something like "Why do anything else?" It was the sunlight, something about the winteryness of it, bright but not really hard, and the piercing blue, but the light, the light, or maybe something else, other unseen things, the sun's gladness maybe, the warmth, even the friendliness on the wind rippling over the hills from other places, forces and influences, mysteries, that were full for me there.

But like slaves, we walked away from that place, only to be redeemed quickly again by the natural world, such was our fate that day. Walking on a thin trail above the side canyon, we descended into a deep glade with gray boulders, and the water dropped two feet from the rocks, four feet, six inches into pools where the sand was low, the pools held together by rocks and roots, and each little fall delighting our eyes and giving different sounds, a melody if you could listen for it. I set my pack by a pool and got the filter out, and Greg and Libby went up creek into light, its brilliance in that cool dark place in the late afternoon, it came through the trunks and all the branches slicing in rays and flashes, streams of it from the edge of the ridge way up there. I finished filtering water and then with the pack on saw the light was gone, below the ridge.

We came up on the old trail bed, which we knew about, and we came onto a shelf on the canyon wall in the trees. Higher up the sunshine was there, just barely still, it slanted through the trunks and coffeeberry and snowberry, now was blocked by a stump, there slanting through. We walked slowly down then, through the foresty shelves just up from the little secret creek, the ground damp and soft under our feet, the small branches giving, not snapping, and we came down to the big canyon again.

We stepped out of the trees and bushes and Greg said, "We were here before," and it was that clearing again, and we looked around and spotted the grinding stone. I don't remember what Libby said. It was about those people from before, something about it, and we stood, and I looked on this place where the people had slept and ate and had brought deer and bear and rabbit meat and skins that they tanned, dropped the bulbs they had dug, the herbs and nuts and seeds they picked, where they ground acorns into meal, and worked bark into cordage, worked cordage into snares, and made weirs from small branches, and taught their children respect, and made love, and danced. Lois Lescohier in Coastal Miwok reported that the Miwok a little north of here danced at any opportunity. If someone was sick, if someone got better, if they took a deer, if there was no reason, they danced. You couldn't see it, but you could get a feeling of their times.

Of course there was nothing to see. But it seems to me now that each of us without thinking or talking about it had been aware of some things through the afternoon. We didn't really know how to talk about it. All the trees around us were quiet, and the earth was still, and we were quiet, too, but something was not quiet, it was a charge from those days. Greg took a picture of the rock, and we said things but mostly just stood with whatever it was, like blind people on a lost trail, letting it come, taking it in.

Then we got on the lightly used trail again and down creek crossed it running like before, and we worked up the mountain on the trail we had missed in the morning, and on the ridge we rode away. There was no old trail the overlay map showed, the ranch road covered it.

Elegy for a Hummingbird
by Millicent Kellogg

Still, in the air, black thread-wire feet
caught on a tendril of vine.
It is smaller than half a thumb.

Colors of the world render its feathers
beyond the reach of art.
Aquamarine seas flow into Pacific blue.

Amazon green trades light with
petals of marigold
and magenta in orchids.

Obsidian eyes that searched
for the sweetest flowers
now stare at infinity.

The tapering beak that pointed only
to beauty, rests silent on a leaf,
sipping nothing.

Lifting this tiny teaspoon of radiance
to catch the wind,
I close my eyes that I might not see
the final downward flight.

Park News
by John Verhoeven
Headquarters Ranger

Happy New Year everyone! So far the winter at Coe has been a wet one as well as a snowy one. My family, the volunteers, and the visitors have enjoyed a rare snow event with a 4" snowfall on January 24. The park has weathered the storms well, and the creeks are flowing with renewed vigor. It is a welcome sight to see the park renewing this winter after last year's fire.

Starting on Saturday, February 16, the areas of the park affected by the Lick Fire have been reopened to the public. Looking about in the fire area, the changes since September have been significant. Right after the fire, the ground was varying colors of ash, in places from puffy white to black. The ash revealed twisting air currents in small funnels of air. Areas like Bear Mountain, which burned intensely, look radically different from before the fire, revealing the topography. Rock formations and old roads revealed themselves. Islands of green surrounded by charred plants show the unpredictable nature of the fire. To see excellent pictures of the fire area over time, please visit *www.coefire2007.info*.

Now burnt areas have turned green with the water and sun increasing. Some of the intensely burned chaparral is stump-sprouting already. The volunteer led Fire Regeneration Study is in full swing and will classify and record vegetation throughout the burned area (see the lead article in this issue). Many parts of the burned area barely show signs that a fire had even happened there. If the weather cooperates, I expect a good wildflower bloom this year. There may also be some uncommon fire-dependent species appearing in the burn area.

If you haven't visited the Headquarters area recently, there have been some facility changes. New ADA-accessible bathrooms are in use at the campground, and some of the old outhouses have been removed. Also, new to the campground are trash and recycling receptacles. The new bins keep the raccoons out and improve the look of the campground.

For those of you who weren't able to make the Pine Ridge Association Annual Meeting, you missed a chance to meet our new Park Sector Superintendent Eddie Guaracha, and new Supervising Ranger Stuart Organo. Eddie brings his park experience to Coe from Mt. San Jacinto State Park. Eddie is a proactive superintendent keen on bringing more department resources to Coe. Stuart most recently worked in the Monterey Sector. Stuart has a strong interest in management of park resources and is a good addition to our team.

As many of you know, Henry W. Coe State Park may be affected by the state budget. If you are interested in learning more about the how the budget may affect state parks, please

go online to *www.parks.ca.gov* and click on the green "Newsroom" tab for official information.

Spring promises to be an active time at the park, with special events at the Headquarters, Hunting Hollow, and Dowdy Ranch entrances to the park. Ranger Cameron Bowers is already preparing for the Coe Backcountry Weekend, and I am preparing for Headquarters events. Please refer to the inserted calendar of events in this issue for further details, as well as the calendar of events at *www.coepark.org*.

I would like to thank you for your continued support of the park, and I hope you are able to visit us soon.

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Park Closures—What Can You Do?

by the *Ponderosa* editors

Coe Park was listed among the 48 state parks proposed for closure.

1. Start by familiarizing yourself with the facts behind the proposed closures by reading the "Fact Sheet" prepared by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. This document is found on its website: *www.parks.ca.gov* (then click on the green "newsroom" box at the top of the page).

2. Check out the informative website of the California State Parks Foundation (*www.calparks.org*) to find a template of a letter to send to your congressional representatives to oppose the closures of one or more parks. The template can be edited online and then sent to the congressional representatives in your districts (based on where you live).

3. If you want to write or call the representatives who cover the area of Coe Park, the **Senators** are Elaine Alquist (916/651-4013, State Capitol, Room 4088, Sacramento, CA 95814) and Jeffrey Denham (916/651-4012, State Capitol, Room 3076, Sacramento, CA 94248). The **Assembly Members** are Cathleen Galgiani (916/319-2017, State Capitol, Room 2170, Sacramento, CA 94249) and Anna Caballero (916/319-2028, State Capitol, P.O. Box 942849, Sacramento, CA 94249). Each has a website and encourages comments.

4. Consider participating in the Annual Park Advocacy Day on Monday, April 7, in Sacramento. This event is organized by the California State Parks Foundation. Attendees will be assigned to a team of other park supporters and then meet with state policymakers throughout the day. **Prior registration is required.** For more information about the events during the day and to register, visit *www.calparks.org/park-advocay-day-2008.html*.

5. Share your wonderful park experiences with others and encourage them to visit parks. Do what you can to support state parks (and Coe)!

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 2. Newly elected President Ron Erskine opened the Pine Ridge Association portion of the meeting. He introduced the members of the Board of Directors and reported on the results of the election of officers. The other officers of the Board of Directors for 2008 are Bob Patrie, Vice-President; Winslow Briggs, Secretary; and Dan McCranie, Treasurer. The other board members are Barbara Bessey, Ann Briggs, Ross Campbell, Kevin Gilmartin, and Priscilla Campbell (Chair of the Uniformed Volunteer Committee). Ron Erskine spoke about the mission of the PRA. Kevin Gilmartin described the annual interpretive and fundraising events, and Barbara Bessey described the various projects and programs that the Board has funded. The PRA members were reminded that the board welcomes applications for funds for projects that fit within the association's mission.

Dan McCranie presented a preliminary financial report for fiscal year 2007. The Association's financial health continued to grow through 2007. The total equity held by the PRA was over $500,000; this represented a growth of about eight percent (approximately $41,000). Donations and grants increased, although the amount from dues decreased. However, Visitor Center sales were down by approximately 13 percent from the previous year, possibly due to the Lick Fire in the fall as well as a generally poor spring wildflower season. The revenues from some of the PRA-sponsored events such as the Hunting Hollow Run-Walk, the Coe Backcountry Weekend, and the Mother's Day Breakfast were extremely good.

Ron Erskine mentioned that, since Coe Park is one of the state parks proposed for closure due to the budget negotiations, park supporters might be interested in attending the Annual Park Advocacy Day sponsored by the California State Parks Foundation. Ann and Winslow Briggs, who have attended a previous Advocacy Day, described the events that take place. Participants are assigned to teams; these teams then meet with policymakers throughout the day. Ann and Winslow felt that it was a very worthwhile effort. This year, the event will take place on April 7 in Sacramento.

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

Winslow Briggs described the Fire Regeneration Study that is currently getting underway to examine the impact of the Lick

Fire. More than 30 study sites have been selected in a number of differing habitats and with differing amounts of fire damage to look for what kinds of new growth emerge and how long the new growth takes to appear. One desired outcome of the study is a set of published papers in refereed journals.

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 2007, volunteers donated more than 16,000 hours, which is more than eight full-time-equivalent paid employees! Of this total, about 3,800 hours were spent staffing the Visitor Center, and another 2,000 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 2007, as evidenced by the number of award presentations that followed.

Eleven individuals, who completed the requirements of the volunteer training program, are Berdett Bevans, Sue Harwager, Lee Ingraham II, Steve McHenry, Gary Newsome, Joanne Rife, Mitsi Shine, Carolyn Straub, Jim Swartz, Sigal Tzoore, and Jeff Zolotar.

Seven Trainees, who served 50 or more hours beyond the training program advanced to Volunteer status: Greg Lee, Mary Little, Ed Nagel, Dick Rawson, Mike Slattery, Sharon Slattery, and Gena Zolotar.

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: Lucy Henderson, Diane Scariot, and Dan Straus.

Former Ranger Barry Breckling's beautiful book on Coe wildflowers was given to the recipients of the 2007 Visitor Service Award. These are 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-five individuals were recognized in this category: Everett Allen, Einar Anderson, Norm Berube, Barbara Bessey, Jim Brady, Ann Briggs, Winslow Briggs, Victor Bubbett, Priscilla Campbell, Stephanie Charles, Colleen Combes, Pat Dallam, Bonnie Doran, Darryl Dubois, Sharry Dunn, Stew Eastman, Bill Frazer, Kevin Gilmartin, Rob Glover, Teddy Goodrich, Mike Harper, Lucy Henderson, Don Holmes, David Hornby, Ken Howell, Ken Hulick, Jodie Keahey, Linda Keahey, Greg Lee, Rick Leonard, Jim Mason, Margaret Mary McBride, Matt Pauly, Dave Perrin, Lois Phillips, Don Savant, Martie Sinclaire, Rob Sinclaire, Bonnie Stromberg, Kitty Swindle, Bev VanderWeide, Libby Vincent, Chris Weske, Bill Workman, and Gina Zolotar.

Fifteen 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 more than 49,000 hours to the park! Norm Berube, Pat Dallam, Bonnie Doran, Tim Fast, Stefan Ignaczak, and Rainer Stabenow each volunteered more than 1,000 hours of service. Karen Mansel volunteered more than 2,000 hours of service. Dave Perrin and Bonnie Stromberg each volunteered more than 3,000 hours of service. Kevin Gilmartin volunteered more than 4,000 hours of service. Chere Bargar and Martie Sinclaire each volunteered more than 5,000 hours of service. Ann Briggs and Winslow Briggs each volunteered more than 6,000 hours of service. And Ruby Domino 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. One individual was so honored this year: Dan Benefiel.

Ranger John Verhoeven made a 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. This year, the eligibility was modified to include spouses of volunteers who donated at least 200 hours a year even if the spouse didn't volunteer that many hours. Thirty-six individuals received the award this year: Everett Allen, Chere Bargar, Norm Berube, Barbara Bessey, Jim Brady, Ann Briggs, Winslow Briggs, Victor Bubbett, Priscilla Campbell, Ross Campbell, Stephanie Charles, Ruby Domino, Darryl Dubois, Bill Frazer, Kevin Gilmartin, Rob Glover, Teddy Goodrich, Don Holmes, Ken Howell, Jodie Keahey, Linda Keahey, Greg Lee, Dan McCranie, Mike Meyer, Bob Patrie, Matt Pauly, Dick Rawson, Martie Sinclaire, Rob Sinclaire, Mike Slattery, Sharon Slattery, Bonnie Stromberg, Kitty Swindle, Libby Vincent, Gina Zolotar, and Jeff Zolotar.

John Verhoeven presented the Uniformed Volunteer Committee's **Golden Bear Award** for exceptional service to **Bonnie Stromberg.** Bonnie became a Uniformed Volunteer in 1995. She has been very active in the Mounted Assistance Unit (MAU), going on horse patrols in the park and creating a special Coe MAU Yahoo group on the internet. She has donated at least 3,000 hours of service; however, more than 1,000 of those hours were donated in 2007 alone! She has worked at the Coe Backcountry Weekends and has served as an assistant coordinator of the events. In the past several years, Bonnie became actively interested in the medium of video; she is currently working on a documentary about horses in the park over the park's history. She was able to video the prescribed burn that took place in the park early in 2007 and turned the footage into a documentary that was shown on local television. She also was actively involved in photographing the Lick Fire, and she attended most, if not all, of the daily com-

mand briefings for the Lick Fire personnel, which she then shared with other volunteers and park staff. Some of her work about the Lick Fire was shown to volunteers during the fall training program; some of her images from the fire are currently on display in the Coe Park Visitor Center. She also videoed the presentation of the Olmstead Award to Barry Breckling by Ruth Coleman; later she prepared a video tribute of this and other footage for Barry's retirement party. She is currently a team leader for the Fire Regeneration Study and prepared data collection forms for use in the study.

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 Barry Breckling, went to **Chris Weske.** Chris became a Uniformed Volunteer in 1985. He has donated more than 3,600 hours in park service; 579 of those hours were spent in the Visitor Center. He has performed foot and vehicle patrols; removed barbed wire; helped with interpretive hikes; and assisted in search tracking classes given at the park and at other park locations. He has worked at most of the PRA-sponsored events (e.g., Coe Backcountry Weekend, Mother's Day Breakfast, and the TarantulaFest). He has done a lot of work on weed management and the eradication of yellow star thistle at Hunting Hollow. He has also been involved with planning and carrying out prescribed burns in the park and in other parks. He has given training on prescribed burns and wildfires to volunteers. He was awarded the Golden Bear award in 1994.

Two new state staff were introduced: Eddie Guaracha, who is now the Gavilan Sector Superintendent, and Stuart Organo, Supervising Ranger for Coe Park. Eddie indicated that his first day on the job was during the Lick Fire, and since he started work, he has seen the fire and its aftermath, Coe added to the current list of proposed state parks to be closed, plus some happy moments such as putting in a new well at Coe Headquarters for a pristine water supply.

A delicious lunch was provided at the end of the meeting; special thanks to Kitty Swindle, Chere Bargar, Jodie Keahey, Lois Phillips, Pat Scharfe, Rosemary Schmidt, Carolyn Tucker, Sandy Voechting, and all of the other volunteers who pitched in to help. A good time was had by all!

Congratulations to all!

Trans California Ramble

This year's speakers were Peter and Donna Thomas, who are artists who produce limited-edition hand-made books. They became very interested in John Muir and his trek from California to Yosemite taken in 1868. They said that no one had ever before attempted to recreate Muir's journey. Since

they were experienced walkers, they decided to take on the project. They tried to walk as close to the original trail as they could to cover the 300+ mile trip. A lot of planning was needed to map out their route, as some of the trails used by Muir are now multi-lane highways. They showed fascinating slides of their trip, including some scrambles over boulders and huge fallen trees in Yosemite that were covering a lost trail. And, some detours were needed as there are now some obstacles that were not present in Muir's time.

Their journey of almost 34 days took place from April 2 to May 14, 2006. One interesting aspect of the trip to the audience was seeing photos taken as they crossed through Coe Park (around days 14 to 16).

They are currently preparing a guide book for other adventurers who might also want to attempt the San Francisco-to-Yosemite journey. They indicated that some segments of the trip might be more conducive for bicycling than walking, so they are planning to describe alternatives to walking as well. Because of their inspiration from Muir and his love of nature, they said that one reason for producing the book is to encourage others to get out and enjoy wild places. Because not everyone might have a month free to make the trip, they plan to divide the book into segments such that people could opt to do only a portion of the trip at a time.

If you are interested in reading what John Muir said about his experiences on the various sections of the trek and what the Thomases found on their journey, check out their website at *www.JohnMuir.org/walk.*

New Treasurer Needed

The Pine Ridge Association is seeking a new treasurer by the end of 2008, as current treasurer Dan McCranie has indicated his intent to step down at that time. The individual who is selected to be Treasurer will become an automatic member of the Board of Directors, as per a vote by the board in 2007. The duties of the Treasurer are:

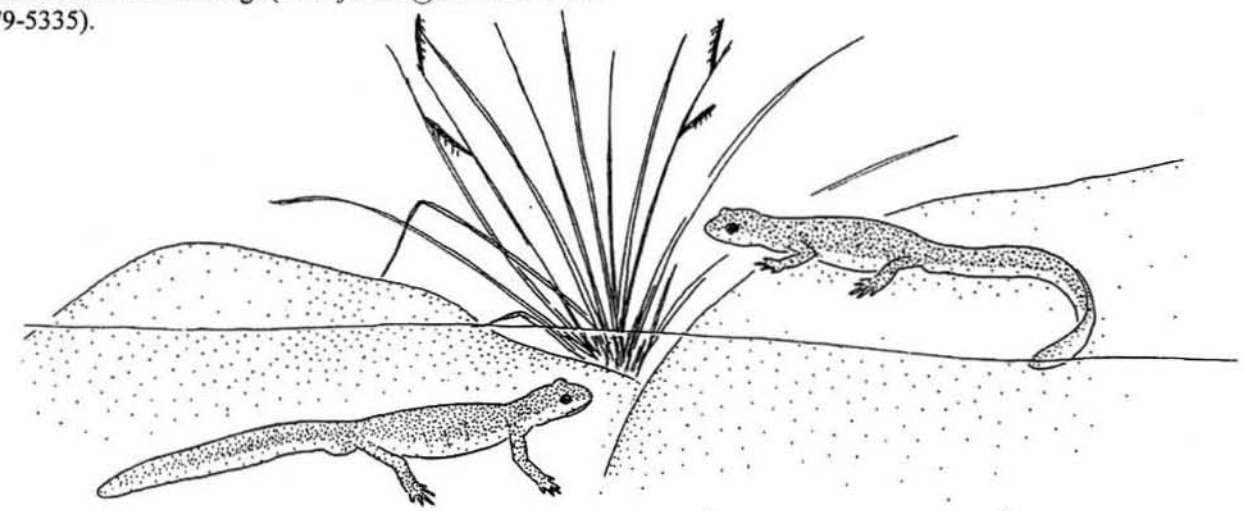
- Pay bills and reimburse volunteers for expenses
- Compute and pay state sales taxes quarterly
- Assist with the preparation of state reports
- Prepare financial quarterly reports for the Board of Directors
- Prepare the annual federal tax forms
- Attend bimonthly board meetings
- Participate in the biannual Visitor Center store inventory
- Make recommendations regarding Visitor Center inventory/pricing/costs and interpretive event revenues/costs

A computer is required. Prior knowledge of QuickBooks would be helpful but is not required. In addition, the Treasurer should become acquainted with the QuickSell program at the Visitor Center.

Individuals interested in being considered for the position of Treasurer should send a brief statement summarizing their accounting skills to President Ron Erskine (at *ronfoxtail @msn.com* or call him at 408/779-5335). Interviews will be conducted with the finalists by the members of the Board of Directors.

Open Meetings of the PRA Board of Directors

PRA members are invited to attend open meetings of the Board of Directors. The schedule of meetings for the remainder of 2008 are: **March 19, May 21, July 15, September 17,** and **November 19.** Because meeting space may be limited, please contact President Ron Erskine for location and other information about the meetings (at *ronfoxtail@msn.com* or call 408/779-5335).



PRA Calendar

Saturday, March 8: **Hunting Hollow Trail Work Day.** Please contact Chere Bargar (408/683-2247) or Kitty Swindle (408/842-6215) for additional information or to sign up. Rain date is March 15.

Saturday, March 15: **Spring at Coe Park.** This weekend marks the beginning of the interpretive programs at Coe Park. There are hikes on Saturdays, an evening program at the Visitor Center on Saturday evenings, and wildflower walks on Sundays. Activities are also planned to start out of Hunting Hollow. The Spring Program schedule is included as an insert in this issue or call the Visitor Center for additional information (408/779-2728).

Saturday & Sunday, March 22 & 23: **PRA Orestimba Outing.** Join Ranger John Verhoeven on a hike near the very scenic Robison Mountain area. The hike will take place on Saturday, with an option to overnight in the park on Saturday night. If the weather does not permit road access, the event will be canceled. Please contact John for more information or to sign up (at *jverhoeven@parks.ca.gov* or call 408/779-2728).

Saturday & Sunday, March 29 & 30: **ROMP and IMBA Trail Care Crew out of Hunting Hollow.** Join fellow mountain bicyclists as they work on Coe trails. Contact Paul Nam for additional information or to sign up (at *vocinam@yahoo.com*).

Saturday, April 12: **PRA Outing to the Thomas Addition:** Join Ranger John Verhoeven on a hike around the beautiful Thomas Addition to look for spring wildflowers. Attendance is limited. Please contact John for more information or to sign up (at *jverhoeven@parks.ca.gov* or call 408/779-2728).

Saturday, April 19: **Spring Trail Day.** Help work on trails in the park. We have two trail days at Coe Park; one in the spring and one in the fall. This year's Spring Trail Day will be held in celebration of Earth Day. For information about what a typical work day is like, please look at our website: *www.coepark.org/trailwork.html.* For more information or to sign up, please contact Rob Glover (at *wrglover@yahoo.com* or call 408/612-2378) or Ranger Cameron Bowers (at *cbowe @parks.ca.gov*).

Friday–Sunday, April 25–27: **Coe Backcountry Weekend.** This very popular event fills up quickly; admission is by a lottery system. This year's event will again offer backpacking on Friday night, and the gates will open at 7:30 a.m. on Saturday morning. For up-to-date information about the event, please check out our website: *www.coepark.org/orestimba.html.*

Sunday, May 11: **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 7: **Tenth Hunting Hollow 5K/10K Walk and Fun Run.** Join us for a day of fun and great exercise! Last year, more than 230 people participated in the event. To see photos taken at last year's event, please check our website: *www.coepark.org/hh-10k.html.* You can register for the event on our website, or you can download an entry form.

Saturday & Sunday, June 21 & 22: **Springs Work Weekend.** Join a group of individuals who are very enthusiastic and committed to improving the springs in the park. For more information or to sign up, please contact Ruby Domino (at *r.domino1@verizon.net* or call 408/529-1016).

See you at Coe Park!

Lowland Shooting Star

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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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