



The Ponderosa ~ Fall 2018

*The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter*  
*Henry W. Coe State Park*

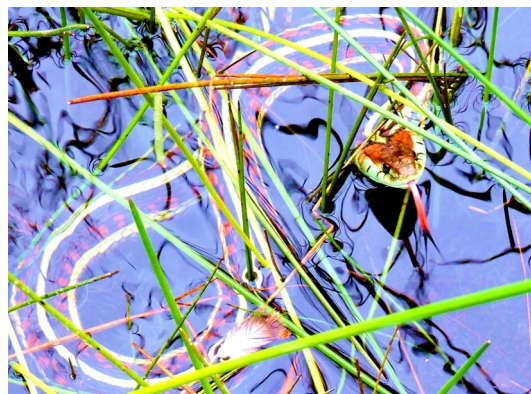
# Creatures of Coe - Garter Snakes

By Joseph Belli

*Curiosity killed the cat.*

*What's in a name?*

Those phrases have been coming to mind with great frequency ever since I started dabbling in garter snake identification. Garter snakes, I've come to realize, have multiple identity issues, and it all starts with the name. They're often referred to as "garden snakes," probably because fewer people today know what a garter is. That's what happens when you name a snake after a fashion accessory that peaked in the previous century.



Red sided garter snake.  
Photo by: Jerry Smith.

Another point of confusion is that garter snakes are actually a group of species, a genus, not a single species. People are surprised to learn that there are oodles of garter snakes—sixteen species in the U.S., three of which are found in Coe, with two more occurring within fifty miles of the park.

Collectively, garter snakes are medium-sized—most species range between 2.5 to 4 feet in length—and many possess a stripe down the length of the back. They're widespread, found from coast to coast and north into Canada at latitudes where no other snakes exist. They're among the most common, familiar, and well-studied snakes in the world.

I wouldn't blame the average, well-adjusted reader if he or she was content to stop right here, and not delve further into the quagmire that is garter snake identification. You see a snake with a stripe down its back, call it a garter snake, and move on. Any further investigation will strain your sanity. Some people, though, just don't know when to quit, and for those poor souls, the rest of this article is for you. You're not content with merely recognizing garter snakes—you want to know which species, and, heaven help you, which subspecies you saw.

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The three species inhabiting Coe are burdened with names so bland and generic you'd swear they were chosen by Joe Friday: Western aquatic garter snakes (*Thamnophis atratus*), Western terrestrial garter snakes (*Thamnophis elegans*), and common garter snakes (*Thamnophis sirtalis*). All have dark bodies with a yellow to orange stripe running down the back. The Western aquatic garter snake, not surprisingly, is highly tied to water and rarely seen far from streams and ponds, where it feeds primarily on larval and adult amphibians. In spring, you might see dozens at a single pond, swimming on the surface or submerging at your approach.

Common garter snakes are also associated with water, but are more likely to be seen away from it than aquatic garter snakes. They also feed heavily on amphibians—in fact, they've evolved a resistance to the deadly toxins secreted by newts, and are the only predators to routinely prey on them.

Western terrestrial garter snakes are more likely to be found in grassland or chaparral than the others, yet they too are often seen in ponds and creeks.

So, three species, all similar in appearance, all frequenting aquatic habitats. How do you tell them apart? Field guides suggest examining scales. Snakes have different groups of scales corresponding to where they're located on the body, and the arrangements and details of those scales vary between species. For garter snakes, key scale groups include internasals (behind the nostrils), supralabials (above the mouth), and chin shields (throat).

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## Creatures of Coe - Garter Snakes, continued...

To get a look at the first two, it's best to take photos from a distance and zoom in, because scales are tiny and garter snakes don't often allow a close approach. To inspect chin shields, though, you've got to pick up the snake and look at the throat. I don't recommend this, not just because you might get bitten, or stress the animal, but because of the smell. Garter snakes, those stinky devils, exude musk when handled. The word "musk" might leave you expecting something manly and outdoorsy, but don't be fooled: it smells like sewage.

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*The devil is in the details.*

I know of a man (cough cough) so determined to identify garter snakes that he actually made a cheat sheet on scale differences and kept it in his wallet whenever he went out in the field. He might have left his credit card home, or misplaced his driver's license, but he was never without his garter snake sheet, at least until his wallet went through the wash and Tide got ahold of it. By that time, though, he had discovered another, much easier way of telling the three species apart.

Both common garter snakes and Western terrestrial garter snakes have red blotches on the side of the body; common garter snakes have red heads, however, while Western terrestrial garter snakes don't. Western aquatic garter snakes are the easiest to identify; they have neither red heads nor red blotches—in fact, there's not a red scale anywhere. Pretty straightforward, and painless: no counting scales, no painstaking photography, no grabbing smelly snakes. Why, then, don't field guides adopt his system?

Because his method, alas, isn't very reliable outside of Coe. All three of those wide-ranging species are composed of numerous subspecies which don't necessarily look alike. In nearby Pacheco State Park, the common garter snake subspecies is different than the one in Coe; it has red blotches but it doesn't have a red head, making it look like a Western terrestrial garter snake. He thought he'd one-upped the experts, but he didn't discover a herpetological breakthrough after all. A lesson in hubris. Back to examining scales.

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Subspecies only muddy the waters further. I'm firmly convinced that the only reason Dante's hell contains only nine circles is that Dante was from Europe, where there are no garter snakes. Our local subspecies are wrought with confusion: the Western aquatic subspecies is known as, depending on which source you consult, either the Santa Cruz garter snake or the Diablo Range garter snake (some authorities don't recognize the latter); the common garter snake subspecies is called the red-sided garter snake, while the Western terrestrial garter snake subspecies is the coast garter snake. Keeping up with all of this is no easy task; garter snakes have more names than Puff Daddy, and a conversation about subspecies can be as confounding as the old Abbott and Costello "Who's on first?" routine. Dante got off easy.

Here's my advice: if you find yourself hiking in the park with a companion, and you're asked what kind of snake just entered the pond at your approach, just tell them it's a garter snake and hope like hell that satisfies them.



Western terrestrial garter snake.  
Photo by: Gary Nafis.

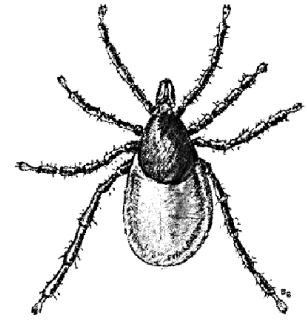


Western aquatic garter snake.  
Photo by: Joseph Belli.

# Tick Talk

By Barry Breckling

This is a "From Under My Brim" article by Ranger Breckling that was in a 1998 edition of the Ponderosa (with a bit of updating).



Once again she started climbing up the deeply furrowed trunk of the blue oak tree. This would be her second try to find an animal to land on and feast upon. Four hours and forty-two minutes later she reached the end of a branch 32 feet above the trail. She jockeyed around on the branch until she was directly above the trail.

With tiny eyes, she patiently watched the terrain below. A mouse scurried across the trail and later a jackrabbit ran by, but they were too fast, too small, and mostly too far away to be likely victims. Finally, two days later, a young male deer wandered slowly along the trail, sniffing around for assorted leafy morsels to munch on.

The famished tick poised herself in readiness. When the timing seemed perfect, she leaped into the air and fell towards her unsuspecting prey. Her target was the deer's neck, but at the last crucial moment the deer turned his head to see what a noisy scrub jay was complaining about, and the tick missed by a mere quarter inch. She landed with a thud on the hard dirt of the trail. "Darn!" she muttered. But no one heard.

To add insult to injury or, I guess, injury to injury, the young buck stepped squarely on top of her as he continued down the trail, looking for more greenery. Her tough little body protected her somewhat, and, pulling herself together, she began crawling (with a bit of a limp) back towards the trunk of the blue oak tree.

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There is much myth and misinformation about ticks. One commonly accepted belief is that ticks climb trees and wait to leap off and land on unsuspecting victims who wander by down below. Although ticks may seem to have dropped from out of nowhere and lodged in your hairline, it's more likely that they posed on a grass stem, hitched a ride on your pants, and diligently climbed up you and your clothing until they found a spot they liked.

It may be that some ticks climb trees and launch themselves into the air. But those that do, in my opinion, must be young thrill-seekers, mentally deranged, or suicidal.

## Ticks at Coe Park

In Coe Park, we find ticks from late fall through late spring, the moister months of the year. The park has three species of ticks that bite humans—two common species of hard-bodied ticks and one less common soft-bodied tick species.

The **western black-legged tick** is often seen early in the tick season. The males have blackish-brown bodies, and the larger females have reddish-brown bodies. They're fairly small ticks and, as you might expect, they both have black legs.

The **Pacific Coast tick** is also common in the park. It looks a lot like the American dog tick (also called the wood tick), which might also inhabit the park. (It's impossible to tell the two species apart in the field.) Both male and female Pacific Coast ticks have some gray on their bodies, but the female's gray is confined to the shield portion of her back.

The soft-bodied **pajahuello tick** is less common in the park. Although it's not known to carry human diseases, some people are allergic to its bite and can develop a severe reaction, with swelling, redness, and pain that take several months to disappear.

Several much less common species of ticks in the park attach to hosts that humans don't often come in contact with, and they don't seem to have developed a taste for human blood.

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## Tick Talk, continued...

### Catching and Feeding on Prey (human or otherwise)

All ticks know when prey is near. They use sense organs to detect animal scent, carbon dioxide, and heat. The adult western black-legged and Pacific Coast ticks are usually found at the end of grass stems or other vegetation, often along trails. They can also be found in brush. Younger stages crawl onto prey from the ground and low vegetation. The adult ticks wait, with their front legs outstretched, and when an animal brushes against the vegetation, the tick grabs on. The pajahuello tick lives in gravely soil and actually looks like a piece of gravel. It crawls along the ground and onto its prey.

Ticks cut an opening in the skin and insert their barbed snout. The barbs make it difficult to remove the tick, and they also secrete a cement that helps keep them attached. They inject their saliva into the cut. The saliva contains:

- \* An anesthetic that keeps the prey from feeling the bite until the tick is firmly attached.
- \* Anticoagulants that thin the blood to make it easier to slurp up.
- \* Blood vessel dilators to increase blood flow.
- \* Digestive enzymes to start the digestive process before the meal reaches their gut.
- \* And on occasion, disease organisms.

The ticks suck the blood of their victims and drop off when they become full. A female tick, after mating, which often occurs on the host animal, lays thousands of eggs on the ground. The eggs hatch into larva, and after they feed for a period of time the larva molt into the nymph stage. Both the larva and nymph stages of our hard-bodied ticks feed on the blood of lizards, birds, and small mammals. It's extremely uncommon for the larva and nymph stages of our ticks to attach to humans.

### Diseases

Ticks are vectors, which means that they pass diseases on to other animal species, and there are many diseases that ticks can carry and pass on to humans. Lyme disease is the one that's gotten the most press though, and rightfully so. It is the most common vector-transmitted disease to humans in the United States.

In 1982, a scientist identified the bacteria responsible for the outbreak of a mysterious disease in Connecticut. The disease had been misdiagnosed as rheumatoid arthritis in 1975 in a small town called Old Lyme. The disease is not a new one. Researchers believe that a similar tick-related disease reported in Europe about a hundred years ago was in fact the same disease. Since the bacteria was identified in 1982, Lyme disease has been diagnosed in many parts of the world, including Asia, Africa, and Australia.

The bacteria responsible for the outbreak in Connecticut was originally thought to be transmitted by a new species of tick, which was given the scientific name *Ixodes dammini*. However, the ticks were later identified as northern populations of the already described tick *Ixodes scapularis*, a species that's found in every state east of the Rocky Mountains. The same tick is called a black-legged tick in the South, a deer tick in the Northeast, and a bear tick in the Midwest. The only other tick species known to carry Lyme disease in the United States is the western black-legged tick (*Ixodes pacificus*), which is found in the Pacific states and in certain areas of the Southwest.

Lyme disease has been reported in all 50 states. The disease is caused by a spiral-shaped bacterium called a spirochete. In humans, early symptoms of the disease usually begin from 7 to 9 days after an infectious bite, but they can occur in as few as 3 days and as many as 30. In about 60 percent of the cases, an expanding red rash develops, often with a clear center. This rash, described as a "bull's-eye" rash, can grow to several inches in diameter. The red rash that forms a few hours after a tick bite, lasts for a few days, and does not expand is not a symptom of Lyme disease.

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## Tick Talk, continued...

During the first stage of the disease, people usually develop flulike symptoms, such as fever, chills, muscle and joint pain, fatigue, and loss of appetite. Weeks or months later, during the second stage, they often suffer from severe headaches, paralysis of facial muscles, and lethargy, symptoms that normally last for several weeks and then disappear. Months or years later, a third stage can set in, with symptoms like chronic arthritis of the larger joints, fatigue, numbness, and memory loss.

As if Lyme disease were not bad enough, ticks in California can also carry Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tick paralysis, human monocytic ehrlichiosis, human granulocytic ehrlichiosis, relapsing fever, Babesiosis, Colorado tick fever, and tularemia.

### An Optimistic Outlook

The prospects are not as bleak as they may seem for outdoor enthusiasts in the West. Although several tick-borne diseases can cause dreadful illnesses and even death, their occurrences are rare. Even the relatively common Lyme disease is much more common in eastern states than it is in the West. In some New England states up to 60 percent of black-legged ticks carry Lyme disease, but in most of California the percentage is rarely above 5 percent, and in our area it's only about 0.5 percent.

If a tick with Lyme disease bites you and you remove the tick promptly, your chances of getting the disease are slim. There is some disagreement about the amount of time a tick must be attached to a human before it can transmit an infectious dose of Lyme disease bacteria. The most conservative estimate I've found is 4 hours, but the most common estimates are somewhere around 36 hours. The reason for the delay is that the bacteria don't begin to multiply in the gut of the tick until the tick starts to take in blood. Then the bacteria must enter the tick's blood system and migrate to its saliva, a journey that takes time.

In the East, humans are commonly bitten by both the adult and the nymph stages of black-legged ticks, and the nymphs are so small that people often don't know that they've been bitten. In the West, people are rarely bitten by the nymph stage of the western black-legged tick, and if you get bitten by an adult tick, you'll most likely know it. When the tick's anesthetic wears off, its human host usually feels a sharp sting at the site of the bite.

### Science in Action

When it became known that western black-legged ticks were significantly less likely to carry Lyme disease than their eastern relatives, scientists began studying the ticks and their host animals to find out why. Biologists decided that the low infection rate found in the western ticks was simply not high enough to keep their host animals infected and sustain the disease, so they began looking for other possibilities.

University of California biologists discovered that one of the western black-legged tick's hosts is the dusky-footed woodrat. Then they found that the woodrat was also host to another species of tick (*Ixodes neotomae*), one that never bites humans. That tick has a Lyme disease infection rate of about 15 percent, which is high enough to sustain the disease in woodrats.

The woodrat discovery was a definite breakthrough, but it still didn't explain why the western black-legged tick's infection rate was so low. The answer to that puzzle became clear somewhat recently. Scientists discovered that western fence lizards, one of the most common hosts for the larval and nymph stages of western black-legged ticks, play a major role in reducing the incidence of Lyme disease in the West. The lizard's blood contains a substance that kills Lyme disease bacteria. When a tick bites a lizard, the bacteria enters the lizard's bloodstream and dies, and when the lizard's blood enters the bloodstream of the feeding tick, the tick's body is also cleansed of the bacteria.

Western black-legged ticks also feed on other rodents, including kangaroo rats, and at least one other tick is known to be a part of the Lyme disease connection. What's more, there are different strains of the Lyme disease spirochete, another complication (and probably not the last) in the highly complex life cycle of a single disease.

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## Tick Talk, continued...

### Lyme Disease Diagnosis and Treatment

If you think you might have Lyme disease, see a physician as soon as possible. The disease is usually diagnosed by the bull's-eye rash, the flulike symptoms, and knowledge that the person with the symptoms may have been bitten by a tick. Blood tests are often used to confirm a diagnosis, but the test results are meaningless during the first several weeks following a tick bite.

Antibiotics administered during the first stage of the disease usually eliminate it entirely or at least decrease the intensity of later symptoms. If the disease is left untreated, the later symptoms can be debilitating, but those symptoms occur in only about 10 percent of untreated cases.

Soon after Lyme disease was discovered, researchers began working on potential vaccines. In May of 1998, the Food and Drug Administration approved a vaccine but issued restrictions on its use. Then came a law suits in 1999 claiming the vaccine caused arthritis. This was followed by bad press and a large drop in sales. The pharmaceutical company took the product off the market in 2002.

### The Best Defense is Good Sense

Ticks will normally grab on to one of your legs or your feet, climb up your body and under your clothes, and search for a suitable place to dig in. To keep ticks from crawling up inside your pants legs, wear long pants, rather than shorts, and either wear gators or tuck your pants into your socks. When you hike cross country or on narrow trails during tick season, check your legs for ticks every 10 to 20 minutes and do a full body tick check at the end of the day. Using these precautions, you can usually keep ticks from finding their way to their preferred destinations.

For even better protection, you can use repellents containing DEET, insecticides containing permethrin, or a combination of the two. You can apply a DEET solution on your skin, your clothing, or both to repel ticks. Applying it on your shoes, socks, and lower legs will deter most ticks. Permethrin, sold under brand names like Permanone and Duranon is applied to clothing. It's not effective when used on skin because our skin deactivates it rapidly. Permethrin will both repel ticks and kill those that come in contact with it. When applied to clothing, permethrin's effectiveness lasts for a couple weeks and through a couple washings. These items can be toxic so read all product warnings.

### Removing Ticks

If a tick does bore into you, it's important that you remove it promptly and properly. Several good tick removal devices are available on the market. If you use one of them, read and carefully follow the directions. If you don't have a removal device, you can use a pair of fine-point tweezers. Grasp the tick as close as possible to the point of attachment and slowly and gently pull until your skin starts to lift. Keep up the gentle pressure (without lifting farther) until the tick comes loose. Don't twist or jerk. If you do, you might squish the tick or break off its head or mouth parts.

If you leave part of the tick in your skin, you should have it removed by a physician. Otherwise, you may get an infection in the bite area. If the tick's body is squished and its body fluids get on you, it's possible that Lyme disease bacteria or other tick borne disease microbes could be absorbed through your skin.

If you don't have tweezers, you can usually grip the tick with your fingers and pull gently until the tick comes out. If you use your fingers, wear thin gloves or hold plastic wrap or paper between your fingers and the tick.

I've made a tick removing tool that works quite well. I started with a small oak twig about two and a half inches long and an eighth of an inch in diameter. I split the twig down about half its length and carved curved notches in the ends so that when you grasp a tick with it and lock the two halves together, the tick is caught, but not squished, in between. The tool is designed for spinning, rather than pulling.

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## Tick Talk, continued...

A quick spin and the tick is out. I've used this tool to remove numerous ticks. Sometimes small ticks or deeply imbedded ticks cannot be removed with tools--see the doctor. If you have removed a tick, you might want to keep it for identification.

After you remove a tick, use an antiseptic on the wound and wash your hands and tools.

Some people still believe that you can get a tick to back out by putting petroleum jelly, nail polish, a drop of kerosene, or other chemicals on it, or by lighting a match, blowing it out and applying the hot tip to the tick's body.

I've never known any of these methods to work. The only result I've seen when they're used is a maimed or dead tick that's still attached. Research in such methods has yielded the same results.

### Take a Hike

There's no reason to deprive yourself of trips into the Coe backcountry. Knowledge dispels unwarranted fear. Just remember: You can avoid areas where you might pick up ticks. If ticks get on you, you can easily pick them off, especially if you've dressed to keep ticks on the outside of your clothing.

Since ticks normally don't attach for several hours, you can usually find any that escaped earlier tick checks by doing a full-body tick check at the end of the day.

You can greatly reduce the chances a tick will get on you by using special repellants and insecticides.

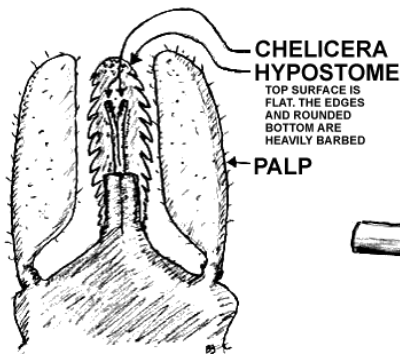
In Coe Park, only one in 200 ticks carries Lyme disease, and if one of those ticks bites you, prompt and proper removal of the tick will keep you from becoming infected.

And, finally, even if you do get a tick bite followed by Lyme disease symptoms, you can get early treatment to eliminate the disease.

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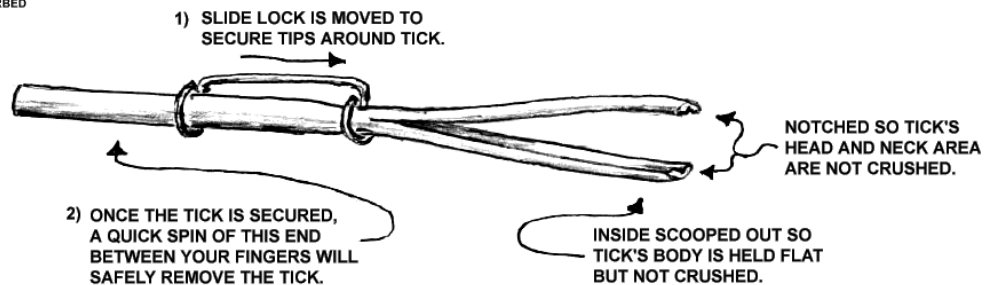
Her long journey continued. She reached an outermost branch of the blue oak tree about 6 hours later. As she gazed down she saw the blurry image of a man pausing on the trail right below her. He was not too fast, he was not too small, and he wasn't that far away (closer than the deer was, anyway). She leaped into the air and dived towards her unsuspecting prey. Her target was the man's neck, but at the very last moment he leaned over to check his legs for ticks. The flying tick missed by a mere quarter inch and landed with a thud on the hard dirt of the trail. "Curses!" she muttered. But nobody heard.

### TICK HEAD AND MOUTH PARTS (TOP VIEW)



THE TICK USES ITS PALPS TO LOCATE A SUITABLE BITE SITE. BESIDES THEIR SENSORY FUNCTION, PALPS PROTECT MOUTHPARTS. THE CHELICERA CUTS A HOLE IN THE SKIN OF THE HOST ANIMAL AND THE HYPOSTOME IS INSERTED INTO THE HOLE. THE CHELICERA CUT CAPILLARIES, THE BLOOD POOLS, AND THE TICK SUCKS THE BLOOD.

### BARRY'S TICK REMOVER





# The Weasel

By Barry Breckling and Teddy Goodrich

In the spring of 1989, reports began to trickle in of burglaries to cabins and homes in remote areas surrounding the park. On a neighboring ranch, a woman entered her home to find a man going through her kitchen cupboards. She called for her husband who responded carrying a gun, but the robber ran out the door, into the woods and disappeared. In an interview with the Modesto Bee, Captain Les Weidman of the Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department described the individual : "Ranchers say the second they spot him he bounds into the brush, and the next second he's gone. He's sneaky, hence the name Weasel."

Owners who used their cabins as weekend retreats became afraid to use them; afraid they would walk in on him on one of his raids. At first the stolen items were food, especially canned meat such as Spam. This gained him his second name, the Spam Bandit. Driven by hunger, the robber carelessly made cooking fires in areas of tall, dry grass, raising fears he would start a wildfire. The Stanislaus County Sheriff's office reported that one cooking fire was started so close to a cabin that the walls were scorched.

After a few months, no longer satisfied with stealing food, he began taking clothing, sleeping bags, fishing poles, and expensive hiking boots. Eventually he burglarized cabins all the way from the Upper San Antonio Valley south to the Garzas drainage and areas west of Coe well into Stanislaus County, especially along the Or-estimba.

Barry Breckling, the Coe unit ranger for thirty years, was actively involved in the search. These are his words:

"One day I found a mess around a neighbor's cabin, and the door had been broken open. There were matches all over the floor and distinctive footprints all around. I made a drawing of the footprint and went on to a cabin downstream a couple of miles. This cabin was broken into, and again there were matches all over the floor. . . . It appeared he had broken in during the night and would see by match light. I followed the tracks across the creek, finding dropped food items and eventually found a stash on a hillside overlooking the cabin."

After months of unsuccessful searching, on August 30th, a large group assembled to track down the weasel; State Park Rangers, Coe volunteers, game wardens, Stanislaus and Santa Clara County Sheriff's officers, the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Posse, San Jose Search and Rescue including Maury Tripp with his bloodhound, Sarah, CARDA dog teams, and a CHP helicopter. Everyone was given a copy of the track of the suspect. He had been seen a couple of days earlier in the park, heading west, so the search was concentrated in that area. Sometime in the late morning one of the motorcycle sheriffs found tracks on the east side of the park, and everyone set out in that direction. Maury put Sarah on the scent as the CHP helicopter hovered above. Within a half hour, Maury and Sarah found the guy partially buried in duff under a bush. Maury told the guy not to move because his dog might hurt him, this as Sarah stood on top of the suspect, licking his face.

The suspect had on three pairs of pants, but you could see through them to his skin. He had paper stuffed in his ears, probably to keep the flies from bugging him, and there on his feet were those boots whose tread ranger Breckling had drawn a few months before.

The suspect had burglarized at least 35 cabins and was sentenced to four years in state prison. He had been on outpatient status from a Bay Area mental facility when he dropped out of sight six months before his arrest. He told officials he couldn't take San Francisco anymore and wanted to live in the wide open spaces.

# Anniversary Project Work at Coe HQ

By Sue Dekalb

As many of you may have noticed, there have been many changes made on the Visitor Center exterior. When we first started the main part of the work, it was rumored that State Park maintenance would be putting in the windows and doing the repairs to the exterior walls. State Park maintenance eventually turned out to be the one and only Rick Hentges who does the maintenance in the headquarters area. The rest of the workers have been volunteers. It isn't the way the project was first laid out, but it has been working quite well so far. Fortunately, other State Park maintenance workers have been helping Rick keep up with all his other duties so he can be there with the volunteers on Tuesday and Thursday.

We started working on the windows and walls back in late July so it has taken three months to complete two walls. All the windows except one have now been replaced and I am sure you will agree that they are pretty awesome. Mostly we have worked two days a week except for at the very beginning of the repairs. As most of you remember, the windows in the VC were in terrible shape. Just leaning on the wall in the vicinity of a window was hazardous. By the time you see this article, the back wall will be totally done. Currently the only thing stopping that wall from being completed is the reinstallation of the downspouts. Most of the scaffolding has been removed and only the necessary scaffolding remains.

The first week in November will bring the start of work on the last wall. The east wall contains only one window, but the wood is in very bad shape. We must remove all the siding so we can install the waterproof Tyvek paper. Once that is done we can install the new window and replace all the siding, replacing bad boards as we go. We will paint the boards before we reinstall them but they will need a final coat after all the siding is put back up. It would be nice to complete the exterior VC work by the end of November but it will depend on the number volunteers available, the weather, and the materials being available.

There have been some other improvements including the painting of the fencing around the Ranch House. The wood was super dry so it takes a lot of primer to get that old wood covered. Once the primer is applied, the final coat of paint can be applied. The white fences are stunning and really show off the area. At this time we still need a lot of painting done on the fence from the cooler to the Ranch House parking area. If you are able to do that kind of work (fence painting), please consider coming up on Tuesday and/or Thursday to help us complete that task. You could also come up any other time if you coordinate with Rick Hentges so the painting supplies will be available.

We have been calling this work the Anniversary Project but it will not be completed by the November 10<sup>th</sup> event. We will continue to work on this project until the work is completed. We will still be working two days a week until the VC is completed, but after that we will go back to one day a week until some of the other maintenance work is completed. There are many projects besides the VC that need work. All the fencing is in terrible shape, the generator shed is rotting away, and many other things need repair and paint.



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## Anniversary Project Work at Coe HQ, continued...

If you have ever said that things at HQ look rundown, how about coming up there and help do something about it. There will always be work to do up there and if you can help do any of it, it would be greatly appreciated. Introduce yourself to Rick Hentges and see if there is any work you can do.

Hope to see some of you up there.



# Tarantula Festival 2018

By Allene Liebenberg

Thanks to all the Coe Park volunteers, staff, and Pine Ridge Association for making the October 2018 Tarantula Festival a fun and informative event for our visitors. There were changes in this year's Tarantula Fest which received positive reviews. First, we had the pleasure of having Marcos Vizcaino speaking about tarantulas. Mike Hundt brought his informative material on our Park for our visitors. This year the White Barn was the scene of the Kid's activities. Thanks to Kitty Swindle for her cute flower pots that the kids made.

Other charges included a silent auction. Thanks to Susan Stillman, Dan Benefiel, and all who donated to our silent auction. We had changes in our menu too which brought positive compliments from both visitors and volunteers.

Again this year's Tarantula Fest would not be the same without our friends from the Morgan Hill Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center. Their ambassador birds always keep the crowds fascinated. Shirley Keller brought her ever-popular snakes. It's so nice to have such a great way for our visitors to learn firsthand about the animals around us. RJ Adams kept the visitor center packed with his tarantula display. John Thatcher and Tom Conrad set up their geocaching display and conducted geocaching hikes. Dean and Laura Yon had their beautiful pictures of Gilroy Hot Springs for our park visitors to see. And of course, the Sada's Spring Jug Band was in tune and played for all. Ed Martini and Mike Ingrassia conducted hikes. Our parking lot people always make our events possible.

Thank you all for all you do.

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## New PRA Members

**We are pleased to welcome the new members listed below. Thank you for your support.**

We need your help to keep our membership list current and accurate. If you have any questions regarding your membership or to let us know of any change of address, please contact us.

Leslie Prevost, Pilot Hill  
Dennis Martin, San Martin, CA  
Carol Abel, Gilroy CA  
Yuri Tsuchitani and David Griswold, San Martin CA

Email: [membership@coepark.net](mailto:membership@coepark.net)  
U.S. mail: 9100 East Dunne Avenue, Morgan Hill, CA 95037  
<http://coepark.net/pineridgeassociation/join>

# News from the Board of the Pine Ridge Association

By Daniel Benefiel, President, PRA Board

The Morgan Hill Community Foundation (MHCF) has an annual fundraising dinner honoring local volunteers and Philanthropists. In 2013, longtime volunteers and former PRA board members, Ann and Winslow Briggs were honored. In 2018, since we have so many outstanding volunteers, the PRA chose to nominate the entire group, and Volunteer Elena Armstrong made a fantastic video for it. The video has Volunteer Committee Chair, Manny Pitta, accepting the honor on behalf of the volunteers, and has video and still pictures of the many things Coe volunteers do. It will be shown at the dinner on Friday Nov 9, but you can view it now [here](#).

In the Summer Ponderosa, Sue Dekalb wrote an article on the effort to spruce up HQ in time for Coe's 60th anniversary. She and Rick Hentges (HQ Maintenance), along with a large crew of volunteers have been working full days every Tuesday and Thursday to get through the long list of repairs. It's amazing to see what they've done. The highlight of the project is a full restoration of the exterior of the Visitor's Center along with new windows. It's beginning to look brand new! The PRA helped fund the new windows, using donations from PRA members and grants (including from MHCF) earmarked for HQ restoration. If you haven't seen it yet, you need to get up there!

Also, for the anniversary, volunteer and historian, Teddy Goodrich, has worked with Patricia Clark-Gray, District Interpretive Specialist, to develop a new display, including a Coe Park timeline for inside the Visitor Center. The PRA has paid for the panels, and we expect to see the display installed November 1. Another reason to get up to HQ!

Anybody who's gone through volunteer training or sat through talks in the Interpretive Room is familiar with the wooden animal track benches. They're a Coe classic but not very comfortable. So, thanks to a suggestion and smart shopping by Michael Hundt, the PRA purchased 16 comfy, stackable chairs.

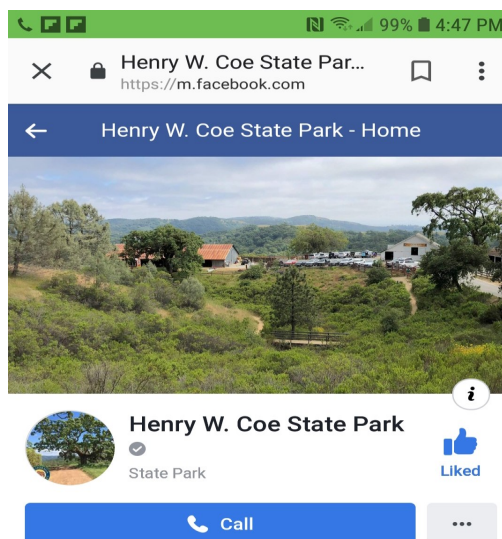
I mentioned in the last Ponderosa that the PRA board has been holding special meetings to talk about how we're doing as an organization and to come up with a list of priorities and actions to better serve park visitors. We'd love to hear from you about new ideas and what we can do better. Please let us know.

The board meets bimonthly. All PRA members are welcome. Recent meetings have been at the homes of board members in Morgan Hill. Please email [pra-board@coepark.net](mailto:pra-board@coepark.net) if you would like to attend. The next meetings will be Nov 13 and Jan 8 at 6:30pm.

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## New Official Facebook Page

Many thanks to Michael Ingrassia and Patrick Goodrich for the development and ongoing support of the new official Facebook page for Henry W. Coe State Park. Check it out!



# Time to Run for the PRA Board

By Steve McHenry, Secretary, PRA Board

The Pine Ridge Association will hold its annual election for the board of directors in December. The terms of two directors—Dan Benefiel and Ken Howell—expire at the end of this year. Dan and Ken have both indicated that they wish to run for reelection, but if you wish to run for one of these seats, now is the time to prepare your candidacy statement and send it to Steve McHenry, 439 Chateau La Salle Drive, San Jose, CA 95111 or email, [stephen.l.mchenry@gmail.com](mailto:stephen.l.mchenry@gmail.com).

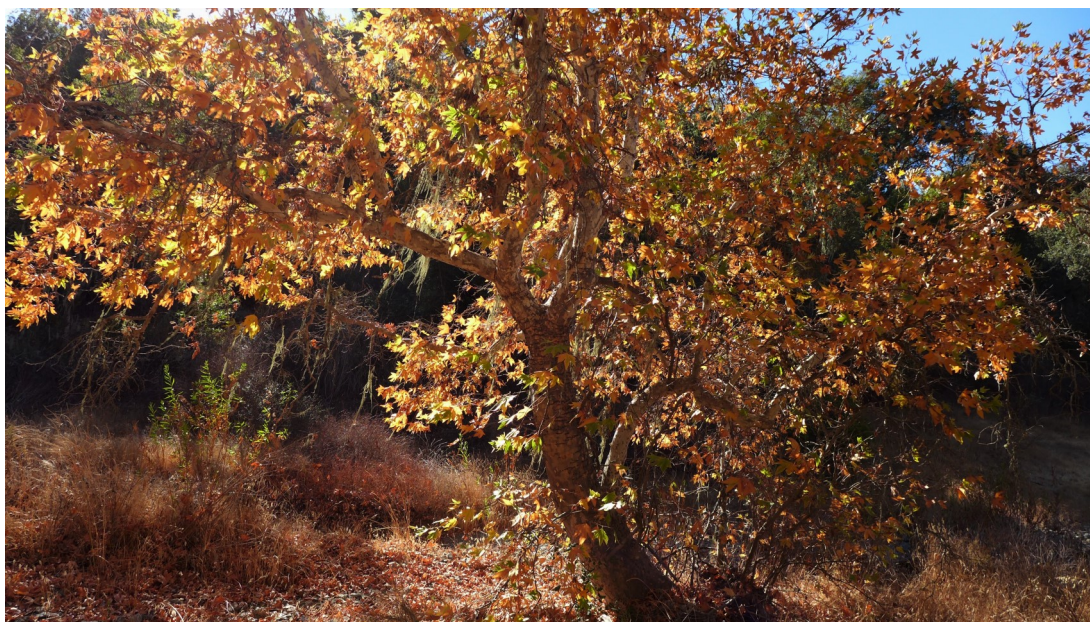
Any association member may run for the board. A member may also nominate another PRA member to serve on the board. To do this, send Steve a short statement explaining why you believe the person would be a good board member, and he will contact your nominee to ask the person to consider running.

The most important qualification for a board member is a willingness to attend board meetings and participate in carrying out tasks for the association. Meetings typically take place every other month on weeknights. The term of office is three years. If a board member is also a uniformed Coe Park volunteer, meetings and board-related activities count toward volunteer hours.

We use the special nonprofit bulk-rate mailing permit to send out PRA-related materials. However, this means that some members might not receive their materials for a couple of weeks after they are mailed. So that the ballots can be distributed (and received by all members) in a timely fashion, it is important that all candidacy statements be postmarked on or before Monday, November 26th.

Please send your statements to Steve at the address above. (If you plan to nominate someone else, please do so at least two weeks earlier.) Your statement might be a few paragraphs long and might contain information such as how long you have been a PRA member, why you became interested in Coe Park, ways you have served the park or other volunteer activities that have benefited the public, any special qualifications or experience you have, and specific plans you have for improving the park as a board member.

If you have any questions about what it would be like to be a board member or if you would like additional guidance on putting together a candidacy statement, please call Steve at 408-286-8858.



Hunting Hollow.  
Photo by: Heather Ambler.

# Gilroy Yamato Hot Springs - Update

By Laura Dominguez-Yon

Many thanks to Marty Cheek for the news coverage about the Sept. 29<sup>th</sup> event at GYHS. It was especially nice that he recorded the return of 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> generations of Roop family members at the event. With the informal “dedication” of “Russ’ Dream” (his hope that the GYHS hotel be rebuilt someday), the Roop Clan is more visible in our events and activities. The large banner of the GYHS hotel will help us visualize part of the goal of restoring public access to this part of Henry W Coe State Park.

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### **December 1<sup>st</sup> (Saturday), 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. GYHS Docent Training, Day 1.**

This is a new docent training, which, when completed, trainees will be able to lead guided tours of GYHS. As with parks whose volunteers were only focused in sharing the historic sites, not the full outdoor experience, this special limited training will allow Henry W Coe State Park to have a similar offering: to be assigned only to GYHS as a docent. In addition to leading guided tours, our docents do miscellaneous maintenance and upkeep tasks: sweeping cobwebs out of the chemical toilets, tidying up the storage areas, photo records of graffiti and vandalism before approved remediation, approved maintenance of picnic and other group areas, etc.

Day 2 of the training will include practicum – giving guided tours to peers and public audiences. The date will be decided by the Day 1 trainees for January or early February, same hours, 8:30-3:30. Yes, there will be homework and tests. We can send you an agenda & schedule via email.

Yes, there is a specific perk to volunteering at GYHS. Talk to us of your interest. Send email or text: info@GilroyYamatoHotSprings.org 408-314-7185.

### **Wednesday, December 5, 2018, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Park Champions Workday at GYHS.**

Sign up online at: <http://www.calparks.org/help/park-champions/> and look on the calendar for “Henry W Coe Park/GYHS” on December 5<sup>th</sup>. Please be sure to sign up online; lunch is provided and we need a head count! Yes, drop-ins are accepted, but we need to know the numbers! We’re limiting it to 14 volunteers – first come, first serve. If you have questions, email or text us, please!



Hunting Hollow.  
Photo by: Heather Ambler.

**Pine Ridge Association  
Henry W. Coe State Park  
9100 East Dunne Avenue  
Morgan Hill, CA 95037**



**PRA Board of Directors**

Dan Benefiel, President  
Adam Escoto, Vice President  
Steve McHenry, Secretary  
Cynthia Leeder, Treasurer  
Paul Gillot  
Sue Harwager  
Ken Howell  
Michael Ingrassia  
Manny Pitta, Chair of the Volunteer Committee  
Stuart Organo, Supervising Ranger

**PRA Volunteer Committee**

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John Verhoeven, Volunteer Coordinator  
Manny Pitta, Chair  
Ken Howell  
Michael Hundt  
Kathryn Levine  
Allene Liebenberg  
John Thatcher  
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*The Ponderosa* is a quarterly publication of the Pine Ridge Association. The PRA's mission is to enhance and enrich the public's experience at Henry W. Coe State Park through education and interpretation. Articles and artwork relating to the natural history, history, and management of the park are welcome. Also, interested in volunteering? Email Manny Pitta, [mannypitta@gmail.com](mailto:mannypitta@gmail.com).

Please send submissions and ideas to the editor at: [PRAnewsletter3@gmail.com](mailto:PRAnewsletter3@gmail.com)

**Deadline for the next issue: January 31, 2018**