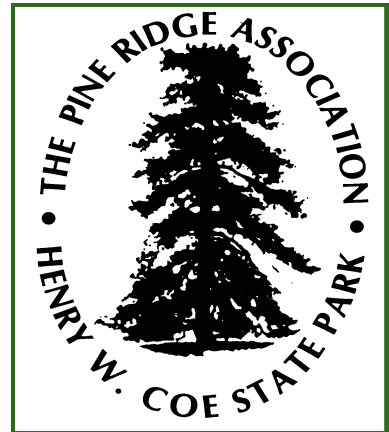


# The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter  
Henry W. Coe State Park



Summer 2017

## Mother's Day Breakfast 2017



### Inside this issue:

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| No more paper copies...                                 | 2      |
| Mother's Day Breakfast 2017<br>By Sue Dekalb            | 2      |
| Does a Red Tailed Hawk...<br>By Carolyn Straub          | 3      |
| Western Skink<br>By Joseph Belli                        | 4,5    |
| History's Mysteries<br>By Teddy Goodrich                | 6      |
| Lion Spring<br>By Barry Breckling                       | 7      |
| Hamming up Backcountry Weekend..<br>By Steve Sergeant   | 8,9,10 |
| Dealing with Yellow Star Thistle...<br>By Sue Dekalb    | 11     |
| Four Score: Tiffany Verbica...<br>By Peter Verbica      | 12     |
| Ranch Day 2017<br>By Chere Bargar                       | 13     |
| Open Space Ride and Hike<br>By Chere Bargar             | 14     |
| Don't Miss Annual Tarantulafest<br>By Allene Liebenberg | 14     |
| ReserveCalifornia™<br>Goes Live August 1st              | 15     |
| New PRA Members   | 15     |
| Editor Changeover<br>By Libby Vincent                   | 16     |
| PRA Financial Report<br>By Cynthia Leeder               | 16     |

Photos by Mitsi Shine

## No more paper copies of The Ponderosa mailed out after this issue:

This is the last issue of The Ponderosa that will be mailed out via USPS. If you prefer to read a paper copy, you can print one from the Coe Park website at:

<http://coepark.net/pineridgeassociation/support-coe/ponderosa>

The current format of The Ponderosa will be slightly modified in the fall and subsequent editions so you can easily print it on 8.5 x 11 paper.

Or if you're planning to be at the park you can stop in at the visitor center and a knowledgeable staff person will print a copy for you. If you would like to do this, it would be wise to call first, 408-779-2728, and make sure a staff person is available when you come to the park.

Thank you for your understanding as we work to save resources, time, and money for the Pine Ridge Association.

Continued happy reading!

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## Mother's Day Breakfast 2017

By Sue Dekalb

Mother's Day Breakfast is always a great event for the Pine Ridge Association and Henry W. Coe State Park and this year was no exception. There were lots of happy visitors, some of them visiting the park for the first time, feasting on freshly prepared breakfast delights and enjoying the occasion.

We did have some challenges to make sure the event came off without a hitch, one of which was figuring out where to park all the cars. This year, balancing the parking for Mother's Day Breakfast ticket holders and lots of day visitors and backpackers was more of a challenge than usual. Patrick Goodrich worked his usual magic to make sure there was parking for everyone, together with the parking crew of Dave Raiman, Mark Deger, Manny Pitta, and Dick Rawson.

Since this was my last year as Mother's Day Breakfast coordinator, I would like to thank people who have helped me over the years. Bev VanderWeide has taken care of scheduling the high school use, getting the Porta-Potties ordered, insurance, and other paperwork required. Jim Wright has taken care of buying most of the food and coordinating with Nob Hill Foods to use their fridge. Bruce and Rosemary Rideout have handled the beverage distribution and making coffee concentrate, and Diane Scariot has handled the coffee concentrate for the last two years. David Perrin and Don Clare have purchased the propane and arranged to have Porta-Potties put in place. Mitsi Shine developed the flyer and took care of arrangements for the band. Bob Kass has bought the flowers and for the last two years has also bought the sausages. Jill Kilty Newburn had previously purchased the sausages. Martie and Rob Sinclair have bought the eggs and those wonderful strawberries over the years. Kitty Swindle and Chere Bargar have placed flyers all over the area to publicize the event. Many other volunteers have helped over the years; huge thanks to each and every one of you.

Next year, Allene Liebenberg will be the Mother's Day Breakfast coordinator. If she asks you to help, I sure hope you'll be willing to. It takes a village, right? Experience is everything when trying to coordinate this event and it takes a while to become familiar with all the details. Getting involved is a lot of fun, it helps support the PRA and Coe Park, and it's great fun to see so many park visitors enjoy the event.

I have enjoyed my time as event coordinator but now it's time for me to do other things like working on trails, eliminating Yellow Star Thistle, and riding my horse. See you in the park!



# Does a Red-tailed Hawk Always Have a Red Tail?

By Carolyn Straub

Our field trip leader looked at us birders slyly, challenging what we knew about a very common hawk, the Red-tailed Hawk. He asked “Know the defining field mark?” We answered “Umm.” Rookies, we’d been looking for the red tail and, not finding that, we weren’t sure which hawk it was.

You may see the Red-tailed Hawk eight times out of ten when you see a hawk at Henry W. Coe State Park. It’s the stocky hawk with broad wings and a short spread-out tail (a Buteo) making lazy circles in the sky. It won’t dive or crash through the trees like a Cooper’s Hawk, bombing perching birds. Floating calmly overhead, the Red-tailed Hawk soars like a search plane looking for mammals on the ground such as hapless rodents. Then, with an eye on the prize, it dives. A good eye indeed.



Tail is a faded pale red

You only can make out by its red tail that it’s an adult. “Red-tailed” Hawks, however, have a better identifier—a signature defining field mark, dark bars on the leading edges of their wings on either side of the head. These are called “patagial bars.” Even if there isn’t a red tail, there are two black, brown, or very light colored bars. This is the stamp of a Red-tailed Hawk.

The Red-tailed Hawk is the dominant hawk of the west. Some say it’s the second-largest Buteo hawk in North America after the Ferruginous Hawk. The Red-tailed Hawk is more numerous, however, at Coe Park.

You’ll see them on the drive up Dunne Avenue to the park as you drive through the Oak Flat Ranch, usually on fence posts, telephone wires, trees, or coursing over a field. In northern Siskiyou County where there are hay fields we once counted more than forty. It’s not your average backyard bird.



This adult shows its bright red tail with a thin black line on the tip

Your excitement can fool you into thinking maybe it’s a Golden Eagle except that the Golden Eagle’s wingspan can grow to 86 inches. The Red-tailed Hawk? Its wingspan may only be as much as 52 inches.

Most Red-tailed Hawks are colored rich brown above and pale below, with an additional signature—a streaked belly or “belly band.” They can also be “dark morph” or all chocolate brown with a warm red tail, or “rufous morph” with reddish brown on the chest and a dark belly. Still, the birds have those dark patagials even if the red tail can’t be made out easily.

The call is a thrilling, raspy, hoarse scream that sounds like a raptor should.

One great sight takes place during courtship. Look up and witness a male and female stretching their talons forward, grabbing onto one another, clasping the talons, and then plummeting in spirals toward the ground before pulling away. We’ve seen the approach but not the finale, and we’ve heard the commotion.



The defining field mark is the dark leading edge on the wing shoulders

You could take a free field trip in the fall, winter, or spring with the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society ([www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org)). You might see plenty of hawks to practice on. Just look in the *Avocet* newsletter that comes out every two months and is posted to the website.

Photos courtesy of the website of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/>

# Western Skink

By Joseph Belli

Autotomy. It's one of those vaguely familiar words I thought I knew the meaning of, but didn't. It means to self-sever, and it's particularly relevant when the subject at hand is lizards. Many of us have seen lizards that have lost their tails; some of us may even have been (cough, cough) responsible for that dropped tail. But not all lizards have that capability. Chameleons, for instance, rely on their tail for climbing. Closer to home, in Coe Park horned lizards have tails that can't detach. Many lizards, though, have the ability to lose their tail to avoid a predator, and here in the park we have one species, the Western skink (*Eumeces skiltonianus*) that seems to have adapted specifically to draw attention to its detachable tail.

Western skinks are common and possibly abundant in the park. I say possibly because Western skinks are secretive. They don't perch prominently like fence lizards, nor do they climb. In fact, they're ground dwellers that often burrow. You won't find them by surprise when you clean out the garage for, unlike alligator lizards, skinks have no use for human dwellings. Western skinks are a lot like salamanders, spending time in burrows and beneath cover objects, though they're much quicker and active during daylight. When they do come out, they're invariably moving through leaf litter and grasses, never venturing out into the open.



Juvenile Skink

Like salamanders, they favor cool, moist areas, and are more likely to be seen along streams than rock outcrops. Perhaps because they move through cover, they search for prey largely by smell, using their tongue. Their preferred habitats in the park are probably oak savannah and oak woodlands, where you may catch a glimpse of one as it scurries through dry leaves on the edge of a trail.

If you're keen-eyed enough to spot a Western skink, you'll behold a creature about the size of a fence lizard but with smooth scales, colored brown with light stripes down each side of the back. In adults the tail is grayish-brown; in juveniles it's a brilliant shade of blue, something you might expect in the tropics rather than temperate California. The blue tail fades with age, and its purpose is autotomy. Nothing stands out like a blue tail wriggling on the ground, diverting the attention of a would-be attacker while the rest of the skink escapes. It seems like an amazing adaptation, and it is, but tail autotomy is more complicated than a get-out-of-jail-free card, for lizards can pay dearly in a number of ways for dropping their tail.

Tails store fat and energy reserves. A lizard that parts with its tail may have a harder time surviving in times of food scarcity, and lizards have been known to return to eat their dropped tails to retrieve some of that lost energy. Once the tail is discarded, a lot of the lizard's energy is redirected toward growing a new one. That energy would otherwise be spent on other crucial things: juveniles with dropped tails may not grow as large as they otherwise would, and adults may forego breeding. Because tails aid in locomotion, a tailless lizard may not be able to run as fast nor balance itself as well, which could lead to its being captured.

Losing a tail is also a once-in-a-lifetime proposition. A lizard may part with its original tail but the one that grows back is decidedly different, and it won't come off. Regenerated tails, unlike the originals, are composed of cartilage, not vertebrae, and they lack the fracture planes of the original tail. Think of it like this: the original tail is like a roll of toilet paper, with prearranged fracture planes spaced at intervals throughout the tail. The replacement tail, on the other hand, is like a roll of duct tape that can't be pulled apart. The new tail differs in other aspects as well: it's less flexible than the original, the tip is blunt rather than fine, and the color and pattern don't match the rest of the body. The replacement tail may seem like a case of bad cosmetic surgery but it's better than going tailless.

Continued on page 5...

## Western Skink, continued....

Some fun facts about tail loss: the action is initiated by the lizard. Predators don't pull the tail off—the lizard chooses to drop its tail by muscle contractions. In some cases, the lizard needn't even be touched. A severed tail also moves in ways completely different from an intact tail, exhibiting much more motion once detached. Dropped tails can writhe and wiggle for over thirty minutes.

The phenomenon of tail regrowth has attracted the attention of medical science in the treatment of human conditions as varied as spinal cord injuries and arthritis. By identifying the genes behind regeneration, researchers eventually hope to stimulate similar genes in humans to regrow new tissue. You never know which innocuous species might lead to significant medical breakthroughs.

Losing a tail, then, is serious business. Most lizards capable of doing so have tails that match the pattern of the rest of the body, which is to say camouflaged. Think of fence lizards and alligator lizards. Western skinks, though, are an exception. They draw attention to that colorful tail. It's as if they want to drop that tail. This is especially hard to understand because skinks spend all their time hidden beneath something or moving furtively through leaf litter. Nothing like a blue tail to catch the eye of a would-be predator. It's the kind of adaptation that would make more sense if skinks spent their time out in the open, but they do the opposite.



Adult Skink

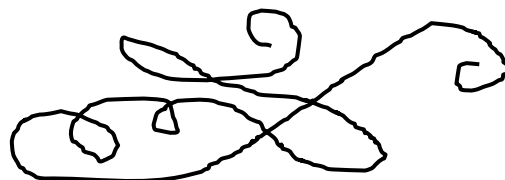
A final mystery: why does the blue tail fade with age? That might make sense if Western skinks grew to large sizes and had other means of self-defense, but that's hardly the case. Adults are not much larger than juveniles and face the same set of potential predators. Why not keep that bright blue tail, even if you can lose it only once? Come to think of it, I've seen a number of Western skinks over the years, most while peering under plywood boards or other cover objects, but I can't ever remember seeing one that had lost its tail. Just another enigma surrounding one of Coe Park's most secretive reptiles.

## PRA Publications

A fascinating read you may have accidentally skipped over in the Coe Visitor Center is *Aquatics Animals of Henry W. Coe State Park* pamphlet by Saelon Renkes and Steven Fend.

An interesting excerpt from that pamphlet is about horsehair worms:

“The common name of the *horsehair worm* refers to an old belief that these long, thin worms were horse hairs come to life. The scientific name, *Gordius*, refers to their tendency to writhe into tangled masses, like the “Gordian knot” of Greek mythology. They are actually the aquatic stage of a grasshopper/cricket parasite. After the parasite has consumed most of its host, the hapless cricket may stumble into water. There the adult parasite bursts through the cricket's abdomen (rather like a Hollywood “alien”) and begins its aquatic existence. These conspicuous worms are fairly common in quiet water in creeks, and may also occur in springs, ponds, puddles, and horse troughs.”



We only have a few pamphlets left so come get one while they are still available!



## History's Mysteries

By **Teddy Goodrich, PRA Historian**

Quite a few years ago, I scanned all the historic photographs that had accumulated at Coe Park. Unfortunately, many of the photos were from unidentified sources among them the photograph, below, of a painting signed by C.H. Harmon in 1895. I'm embarrassed now to admit to the number of derogatory comments I made about the painting, especially about the cattle (or are they deer?).

Today's mystery is to find out where the original painting is now, and where the setting is.

It turns out that Charles Henry Harmon was a famous western artist. Today his paintings, which are often of the Santa Clara Valley, the Sierra, or the Monterey Peninsula, sell at auction for five figures. Born in Ohio in 1859, Harmon came to California while a young man and worked as an apprentice retouching negatives at the studio of Louis Lessier in San Jose. Lessier shared his studio with another man, photographer and artist Andrew P. Hill, who was a friend of Henry and Charles Coe.

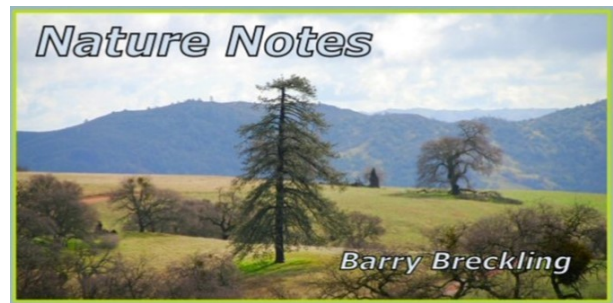
The painting raises a number of questions, many of which are unanswered. Originally I, along with others, assumed the painting was of Henry Coe's homestead at Cold Flat. Bob Patrie created a digital image of the scene and superimposed it on a USGS map. Using Bob's creation, a group of us went out to Cold Flat to find the cabin, but it wasn't there. The Coe cabin was, in fact, located up a small draw that was unlike anything in this photograph. The scene is also reminiscent of the Miller Field where the Coes and their neighbors gathered their cattle for market. By 1895, the date on the painting, the Coe brothers had purchased Pine Ridge as well as the Miller Field, so they may have abandoned their cabin at Cold Flat. The most curious and most telling figure is the mounted cowboy and his dog in the lower left. It may look familiar because the same scene, a photograph, is displayed in the tack room in the visitor center. The cowboy is Gilmer "Gillie" Gruwell; the dog is Bruce, Henry Coe's famous cattle dog. The photo was taken by Andrew P. Hill. It has definitely been retouched; the horse and rider look almost as if they were superimposed on the background. Retouched, perhaps, by Charles Harmon?

Maybe someone reading this article will know the answers and tell us the rest of the story.



## Lion Spring

It was a warm October afternoon. A doe and her two fawns wandered into the shady area at the base of a 15-foot tall rock outcrop. They took turns drinking the cool water from the spring flowing just a few feet from the rock. Their wet noses searched the air and their long ears twitched but remained alert to any danger. They were, however, unaware of the slow, silent movements on top of the rock. Deer have difficulty seeing upward.



I once came upon a young deer on the Corral Trail. It would put its head down to grab some green morsels and I would take a few silent steps toward it. Just before it lifted its head, I froze. Proceeding in this manner, I ended up standing only six or eight feet from it before it realized I was there. (If you try this, don't choose an antlered buck.) The inability of deer to see upward is offset by their great sense of hearing—look at their giant ears. They are also alert to movement, but not form.

On a warm autumn day, many years ago, two women sat in the shade atop the 15-foot tall rock outcrop grinding acorns into a meal. This rock was quite unusual for a milling site. Most mortar holes were made in relatively soft rock. This rock consisted mostly of hard chert, a material that could be made into arrowheads, knives, and other sharp tools—when of good quality. Tools made of obsidian, brought in from distant areas, have been found in Coe Park but two chert quarries in the park provided very nice flakeable and sharp tool material.

The stealth hunter had large feet with soft pads allowing for near-silent stalking across the hard rock. To make sure his hind feet didn't step on a noise-making twig, he moved forward putting his hind feet exactly where his front feet had been.

As a young kid growing up in the East Bay, I recall a number of people who, over several years, reported seeing a black panther. Later, I worked at the Alexander Lindsay Junior Museum (now the Lindsay Wildlife Experience) in Walnut Creek. The staff was occasionally called to check out a sighting of a mountain lion in someone's backyard. Most calls, if not all, turned out to be big house cats or at best a bobcat. However, there were enough sightings of the "black panther" over a long period of time that I think it was likely a melanistic mountain lion (the opposite of an albino animal).

As a kid, I fished at Three Lakes, little stock ponds not far from home. This East Bay area at that time was still rather wild. Back then you could see the occasional coyote, bobcat, mountain lion, and maybe even a "black panther." Our biggest fear when hiking to the lakes wasn't scary carnivores, it was getting roped and dragged off the cattle ranch by Joaquin, the one-eyed cowboy rumored to patrol the ranch. Some of that ranch still survives as open grassy areas but the rest of it and the surrounding areas stretching to Mt. Diablo and beyond are covered with thousands of houses. On one fishing trip to Three Lakes I saw what was without any doubt a lion track in the muddy edge of the biggest pond. A few years later in the nearby protected area of Mt. Diablo State Park, I saw a lion cub running down the road in front of me, and over the years working at Coe Park I saw over twenty lions and hundreds of lion tracks.

Pick a warm October day and sit quietly atop the 15-foot tall rock just above a spring named by Sada Coe Robinson and appreciate the protected land around you where lions can still live and thrive in peace.

## Hamming Up Backcountry Weekend: Amateur Radio Volunteers Help Event Run Smoothly

By Steve Sergeant

A teenage boy ran breathlessly into camp looking for emergency medical help. It was Saturday of Backcountry Weekend 2015, after lights out at Orestimba Corral. The boy had thrown a knife at a tree, missed, and accidentally stabbed his father in the knee. After running 5.6 miles from Jackrabbit Lake to the Orestimba Corral he was directed to Coe Park volunteer Dave Flack's tent. Dave was a long-time uniformed PRA volunteer with radio-operator training. In this remote, eastern side of Henry Coe State Park there is no cell phone coverage but Dave had the training and gear to place a call for help.

The Backcountry Weekend lottery winners get easy access to the remote east side of Coe Park, but they may not be aware of all the technological efforts that go into coordinating the event. Behind the scenes, 31 volunteers provided ham radio communications service this year. These volunteers are federally licensed amateur radio operators who are commonly called "hams." With their own equipment and expertise, the number of hours they dedicate to the Backcountry Weekend has grown to almost 1,200 in 2017. Victor Bubbett, a PRA volunteer who now coordinates ham radio support, explains that hams help with Backcountry Weekend activities by establishing an emergency and nonemergency communications network that covers the entire area.

As for the ending to the story about the boy who ran for emergency medical help, help came more than four hours after the accident. Victor says, "An ambulance and a fire truck rolled past [the] Orestimba [Corral], deep in the night. ...All was well the next day [and] that was the reason we decided to try to put radios closer to where people are going."

After the 2015 Backcountry Weekend, the State Parks system consolidated radio dispatch in Sacramento, which resulted in new restrictions limiting volunteer access to State Parks radios. Ham volunteers realized they'd need to develop their own system if they were going to succeed in putting radios closer to people on Backcountry Weekends.

Ham volunteer Steve Stearns, who is also the chair of the local Sierra Club chapter's backpacking section, is a retired radio communications engineer and lifelong ham. He set about building computer models to find ways to cover the entire Backcountry Weekend event with reliable radio communications. He came up with an impressive plan that required additional temporary radio relay stations (repeaters) on a different frequency from the State Park's system. He also created maps that showed the State's coverage for every popular Backcountry Weekend spot compared with the expected coverage for his modeled system. Victor recalled seeing the maps for the first time: "Red was where the signal strength was good. ...The map [of the State's coverage] was very fitfully pink [and] the map [of the modeled ham radio coverage] turned a bright, bloody red."

Two weeks before the 2017 Backcountry Weekend Victor, Steve, and I scouted potential repeater locations in order to implement Steve's plan. Steve and Victor found a site near Mustang Peak, and I found one north of Mississippi Lake. These two accessible sites, along with the one used since 1999 above Dowdy Ranch, could host portable repeaters.

The day before Backcountry Weekend this year, a team gathered on a hill above the Dowdy Ranch visitor center to install a repeater that Sean Fitzharris provided. Almost 100 pounds of metal cabinet, a car battery, a solar panel, an antenna, and a 24 foot mast were hand carried up a grassy hill, set up, and tested. The repeater provided coverage from Bell Station to the Orestimba Corral. Next we installed Walt Dunkel's repeater system of similar size and weight on a ridge near Mustang Peak. A smaller team headed up County Line Road to a peak between Mississippi Lake and Bear Mountain to install my repeater, a smaller, more modest 30 pound unit that could be carried in a backpack but would cover deep into the Orestimba Wilderness. By evening, all three systems were up and tested.

Continued on page 9...



## Hamming Up Backcountry Weekend..., continued...

Keeping a temporary communications network running in a wilderness setting has its challenges. On the first night, a disturbing amount of wind buffeted my campsite near my repeater. By morning, the antenna mast next to my tent was partially blown over after one of the guy-line stakes pulled out. Even worse, my repeater, a 25 minute walk to the north, wasn't responding. Fearing an irreparable disaster, I grabbed 10 pounds of tools and a fully charged 15 pound spare battery and hiked to the repeater site. The solar panel had flipped over in the wind, was no longer facing the sun, and the repeater battery was drained. The replacement battery and putting more robust knots securing the solar panel put it back in operation before 9:00 am.

Victor and other volunteers coordinated the communications traffic from their network control campsite at the Orestimba Corral. "We need to know things," Victor said, "like when the gates are open and [when] new park visitors are on their way to the backcountry. ...Are supplies in place? Are group hikes led by a park volunteer doing ok? If not, how can we help? ...The shuttle service, which helps us avoid many vehicle trips into the park, is coordinated by radio. Messages are delivered, [including] humble but urgent messages like "Toilet paper has run out at Mississippi Lake."

Our communication efforts helped a visitor limping along the Orestimba Creek Trail with a broken boot; alerted us when a large group arrived at a lake, making it too crowded as a destination for anyone else; relayed queries from worried parties who were waiting to pick up friends who hadn't come out on schedule; and rescued an expensive camera left at the corral after the event officially ended, finally reuniting it with its owner.

I heard a radio conversation about a young child who was wandering alone near Paradise Flat. Victor told the rest of the story: "Hikers had come to a radio post reporting the situation [and] we tried to find more information by polling other stations in the neighborhood. In the process, Steve Stearns, from the [Jackrabbit Lake] station where he was posted, went out to the trail and found the child and, in the end, also found his mother." If the radio crew hadn't located the child quickly, Victor would have needed to report the situation to State Parks central dispatch. He added, "The area would have been flooded with park [staff and law enforcement]. This is the kind of thing rangers would drop everything for. As it was, it didn't even go on [their] report."

Walt Dunckel was enthusiastic about his role on the communications team. "I did daily checks of the battery voltage for [the Dowdy Ranch] and Mustang repeaters. I got the dream position of being a ham radio operator at large, and was able to roam with my bicycle. This actually worked out pretty well because there was no [vehicle] access to the Mississippi or Mustang repeater sites. This way was much quicker than walking. I was able to assist a young mountain-bike rider that had fallen at slow speed on County Line Road just above the Narrows, on the Mississippi side, and was having trouble getting his cleat unlatched from his pedal."

My own passions for wilderness travel and technological challenges are what compelled me to become a Backcountry Weekend ham volunteer. Victor describes the satisfaction he too finds in it by saying, "Watching people come forward, offering their time or the use of their gear, is both amazing and also fun." He noted "People are signing up to be Coe Park uniformed volunteers because they want to be part of this. Talk about amazing and wonderful."

This seemed to be the first ever Backcountry Weekend when it was possible for hams stationed at any of the popular destinations to communicate with each other. "Our signal was usable at the [Dunne Avenue] visitor center, as far away as Hollister, and to the very last and most remote periphery station," Victor said gleefully.

The Backcountry Weekend radio crew is morphing into a year-round Coe Park volunteer communications committee, with a mission to assist park events and operations any way we can with volunteer radio operations. The operations for the Hunting Hollow 5K/10K Fun Run and Walk also benefitted in 2016 and 2017 from volunteers deploying a temporary repeater and stationing themselves at key points.

## Hamming Up Backcountry Weekend..., continued...

“We still don’t have the installed base of licensed operators among our own [uniformed] volunteers that is needed to operate an event as massive as Backcountry Weekend,” said Victor. It might not be a problem that the PRA has a shortage of uniformed volunteers with radios because, by going to amateur radio operators for help, enthusiasm to provide volunteer service to Coe Park has spread to a whole new community. I think that’s good news.

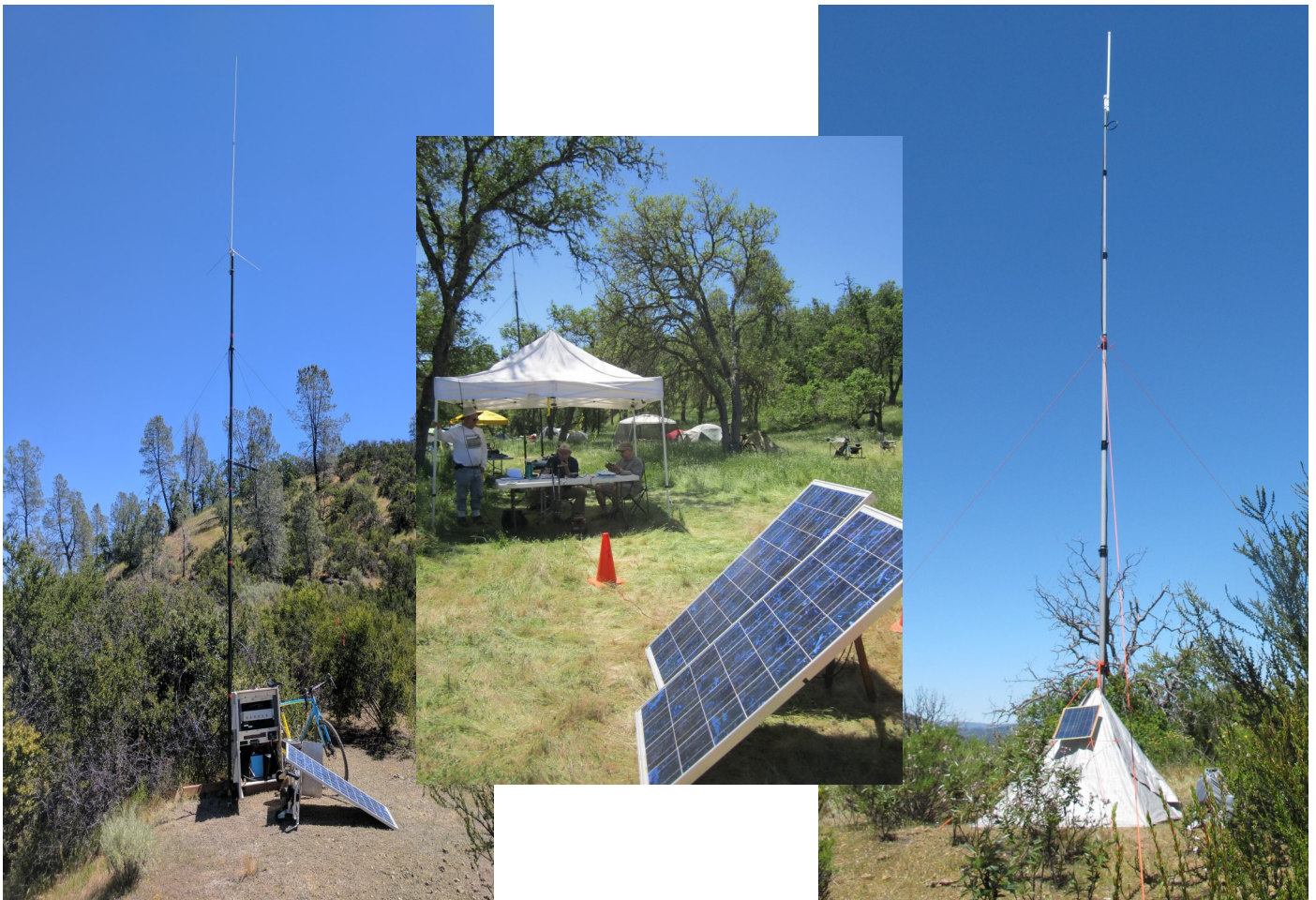
### Acknowledgements

The following people provided a leadership role and/or loaned significant equipment for the 2017 Backcountry Weekend communications: Victor Bubbett (KG6MAQ), Steve Stearns (K6OIK), Sean Fitzharris (K6MOW), Walt Dunckel (K6ATV), Steve Sergeant (KC6ZKT), Walt Gyger (KJ6WBO), Mikel Lechner (KN6QI), and of course the team’s founder, the late, great Dave Flack (W6DLF).

People who were also active volunteers on the radio communications crew for Backcountry Weekend 2017 included: Bobby Barnett (KA4VBF), Dan Benefiel (KM6BZJ), Hella Bluhm-Stieber (KJ6OHF), Mark Deger (KG6IFQ), Tim Fairbairn (AF6TF), Aaron Gutierrez (KJ6UKW), Alain Gyger (KJ6WBO), Pascal Gyger (KJ6WBO), Ed Martini (K6EWM), Charlie Morrin (KI6FXY), Dave Raiman (KC6UMZ), Gary Smith (KI0QXS), Cliff Sojourner (K6CLS), John Thatcher (KM6BSP), Dave Waldrop (N1LKN), and Chris Weske (KF6EAN).

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Steve Sergeant is an electrical engineer, backpacking guide, amateur journalist, and volunteer bioacoustics researcher. He has been leading an annual Sierra Club backpacking class into Henry Coe State Park for fifteen years.



# Dealing with Yellow Star Thistle at Henry W. Coe State Park

By Sue Dekalb

I can barely remember when there wasn't any Yellow Star Thistle in Hunting Hollow and almost every drainage in the park, but the days of the park without invasive weeds have long since passed.

Many efforts have been made over the years to rid the park of Yellow Star Thistle, most without much success. Coe Park does not have enough resources to deal with the problem, and solutions that take multiple years to be successful are tried for only one year.

In years past, I would work with friends to pull the plants and leave them in piles beside the roads. There was so much Yellow Star Thistle in Hunting Hollow that we were never able to get beyond that area and remove the weeds from other areas of the park. We eventually learned that bagging the pulled Yellow Star Thistle and removing it from the park was the best way to deal with it and avoid seeds being spread when the grader was at work on the roads.

State Park crews spray the plants early in the season and then volunteers start pulling the flowering plants later in the season. Yellow Star Thistle is a very hardy plant and it comes up all summer so you can't clear the meadows once and assume you're done. You have to keep at it.

The worst is when Yellow Star Thistle gets into the creeks and is undiscovered for a season. The seeds that fall into the creeks are then carried downstream during the rains and spread throughout the park. The seeds are viable for years; when areas are left untended from one year to the next the result is a devastating spread of Yellow Star Thistle.

Especially in the last two years, other volunteers have joined me on the quest to remove Yellow Star Thistle from Coe Park and throughout the park wherever we find it. This year we have spent a great deal of time in the East Fork of Coyote Creek, which has some huge patches along its length. We also spent a lot of time removing Yellow Star Thistle from Pacheco Creek and the hills along the North Fork Trail. Kaiser Aetna Road and the areas around the Dowdy Ranch visitor center, including the Hersman Pond Trail and Sulphur Spring, have been closely watched. The areas around Coit Horse Camp have also been worked over the last several years and I have spent quite a bit of time spraying and pulling Yellow Star Thistle in Hunting Hollow this year as well.

It is always nice to have visitors ask what we are doing when we are pulling Yellow Star Thistle, especially in Hunting Hollow. Most people I talk to are amazed that we are doing anything since they aren't really seeing it any more as they explore the park. Other parks in Santa Clara County are full of Yellow Star Thistle.

This year the volunteers who have helped remove Yellow Star Thistle from the park on multiple outings include Paul Liebenberg, Allene Liebenberg, Kelly Kersten, Ted Tawshunsky, Don Clare, Art Pon, Jodie Keahey, Dan Healy, and Jesus Valdez. Those who have helped at least once include Linda Keahey, Chris Weske, Ken Hulick, Heather Ambler, John Thatcher, Bob Kass, Greg Scott, and Eric Simonsen. A special thanks to park staff for helping to dispose of all the bags of Yellow Star Thistle we collected—Rangers David Hermitte, Cameron Bowers, and Jen Naber, and Coe Park maintenance workers Rick Hentges and Max Castillo.

If you love the outdoors and would like to help remove Yellow Star Thistle next year, please do not hesitate to contact me ([sue.dekalb@verizon.net](mailto:sue.dekalb@verizon.net)).

If you're out in the park and see any Yellow Star Thistle, please report the location to Susan Ferry, Environmental Scientist, Monterey District, California Department of Parks and Recreation, [susan.ferry@parks.ca.gov](mailto:susan.ferry@parks.ca.gov).

Hopefully, we can add some other invasive plants to the list of weeds we will try to eliminate from the park. These include Tocalote and Italian Thistle that are not managed at all at present. We need to remove as many of these invasive plants as we can to keep the park a wonderful example of a native and natural California landscape.



## Four Score: Tiffany Verbica Wins Women's 10K at 2017 Hunting Hollow 5k/10k Fun Run and Walk

By Peter Verbica

For the fourth year in a row, Tiffany Verbica placed first in the women's 10k of the Coe Park Hunting Hollow 5k/10k Fun Run and Walk. Tiffany is married to Henry Coe's great grandson, Peter Verbica, who serves on the board of the Pine Ridge Association.

The course was an out-and-back starting from the Hunting Hollow entrance to Coe Park. With the really good winter rains this year, runners splashed across the creek in many places. Water and fresh fruit were provided and a large volunteer turnout to support the event ensured a flawless day.

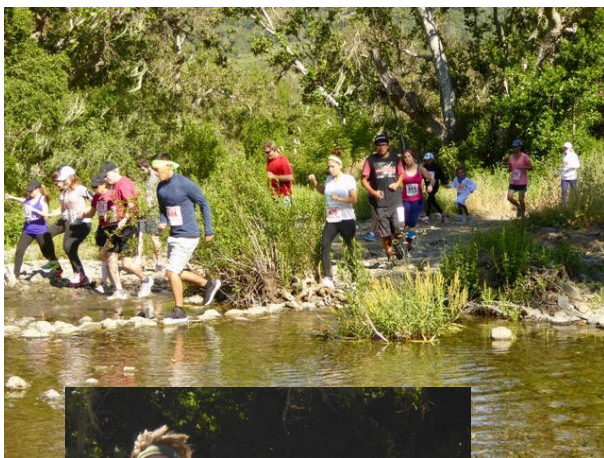
Race director David Cartwright handed out trophies, medals, and prizes to the happy winners.

All's well that ends well. Tiffany said "What better way to top off the day than to celebrate over dinner with Sada Coe Robinson's youngest daughter, Irene."

For full information about race winners and some great photos (thanks, Dave Raiman!) see:

<http://coepark.net/pineridgeassociation/programs-events/annual-events/hh5k10kresults>.

More pictures from 2017 Hunting Hollow 5k/10k Fun Run and Walk  
Photos by Mitsi Shine





# Ranch Day 2017

By Chere Bargar

After all the rain this past winter, the blue skies and mild temperatures on Ranch Day were much appreciated by visitors and volunteers. Participants got to hold or pet a number of animals including miniature horses, a big horse, sheep, donkeys, chickens, and a tortoise. They stamped a design on pieces of leather to make a key chain. They learned about many of the creatures that live in Coe Park while feeling the fur or feathers of the various stuffed animals and pelts brought by Celia McCormick. Kids spun wool on a spinning wheel and learned how clothes were made many years ago. Many visitors tried their hand at swinging a lasso and trying to rope a steer. The volunteers at the craft table were kept busy helping children make prairie dolls and various creatures from oak galls. They learned that when families moved across the United States in covered wagons they could bring only essentials. Little girls had to leave their dolls behind so they made new dolls from pieces of material torn from petticoats. Volunteers collected oak galls along with sticks, feathers, moss, etc. so kids could make oak gall critters. It is truly amazing to see what kids create. Lots of imagination. There was still some water in the creek so of course the kids had a great time getting wet.

A big thank you to all the volunteers who helped make another Ranch Day a huge success. Another big thank you to all the visitors who enjoyed the day, some at the park for the very first time.



Photos by Sue Dekalb



Photos by Ligaya Strenfel



## Open Space Ride and Hike

By Chere Bargar

June 17th marked the day for the second ride into Open Space Authority lands across Gilroy Hot Springs Road from Hunting Hollow. Equestrians were joined by Coe Park volunteers who hiked through the meadows and crossed the creek several times. Some participants turned around at the stone house while others continued up the road to Timber Ridge to enjoy the views of Santa Clara Valley below. It was hot, so all were thankful for the watermelon and extra water at the stone house provided by Mike Hundt and the same treats back at Hunting Hollow provided by Kitty Swindle.

A big thank you to Mike and Pauline Wood for hosting this event. They are both Open Space Authority docents as well as Coe Park volunteers.

We hope to make this an annual event and hope you join us next year for this once-a-year opportunity.



Photos by Pauline Wood

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## Don't Miss the Annual Tarantulafest, Saturday October 7, 2017

By Allene Liebenberg

It's time again to join us for Coe Park's annual Tarantulafest 2017! This is a fun day held at the visitor center campground where you can relax and eat delicious barbecue and other treats, enjoy the views, or take a walk with one of our knowledgeable volunteer naturalists. For music lovers, the Sada Springs Jug Band will be performing and, of course, you can check out our celebrated guests, the tarantulas. The snake exhibit will be there too and the birds from the Wildlife Education Rehab Center of Morgan Hill will make an appearance. Kids will have huge fun in the activities room creating tarantula art keepsakes. And there'll be some great prizes to win in the raffle, which raises funds for the Pine Ridge Association. Raffle tickets go on sale August 15, 2017.

For more information including meal ticket sales, see:

<http://coepark.net/pineridgeassociation/pr-a-event-list/details/47-fall-tarantula-fest-and-bbq>

Or call Allene Liebenberg, 831-970-3728.



## ReserveCalifornia™ Goes Live August 1

(extracted from the California Department of Parks and Recreation News Release dated July 28, 2017)

Starting Tuesday, August 1, visitors to California's state parks will have a new platform for booking camping and lodging sites, and tours. Using the new system will be easy to plan adventures within state parks, since it is similar to booking hotels, airline tickets and other comparable services.

Supporting state park field operations and enhancing the experience of visitors with a modern platform was key for transitioning to a new reservation system. The outdoor public spaces and recreational programs supported by California State Parks are a gateway to connecting with families, friends and communities. Off-highway motor vehicle recreation, boating activities, horseback riding, on and off-road cycling, hiking, camping, rock climbing, tours, hikes, school group enrichment, and special events are just some of the activities enjoyed in 280 state park units organized into 22 field districts.

"We're excited about the new opportunities ReserveCalifornia™ will provide to California state park visitors," said California State Parks Director Lisa Ann L. Mangat. "The new reservation system improves service delivery to our visitors online and in our park units. The public will be able to explore California's outdoor recreational opportunities in a more modern way via interactive maps and other online tools. Go invent your adventure!"

ReserveCalifornia™ will provide more user-friendly web services and greater accessibility to more visitors for highly sought-after camping and lodging locations in California. A variety of new features will be phased in between August 1 and March 1, 2018, including; moving from first-of-the-month on-sale days to a new rolling window reservation service. This means that visitors will be able to reserve campsites and lodging six months in advance from the current date.

**Specific to Henry W Coe SP will be the ability to reserve in advance the Manzanita Point Group Camps and the Coe Ranch Campground sites.**

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## New PRA Members

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

Kristen and Torben Spitzer, Alameda CA  
Robert Barnett and Adriane McFetridge, San Jose CA  
Joe Witherspoon and Lydia Le, Redwood City CA  
James Bath, Morgan Hill CA

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.

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

# Editor Changeover

By Libby Vincent

I've been having great fun for lots of years (at least ten) editing all material that's published in The Ponderosa as well as writing and rewriting material. Now that I live hundreds of miles from Coe Park, working on The Ponderosa has been a wonderful way to stay in touch with people, places, and activities at the park.



I'm now moving on to other volunteer opportunities and the team of Patrick and Teddy Goodrich will take over the editing work. Sue Harwager will continue the desk-top publishing work. The Ponderosa is in good hands.

*Thank you Libby for your passion and commitment to detail these many years, ensuring that each edition of the Ponderosa is clear, accurate and informative! Best of luck in your future endeavors and keep in touch!!*

# Pine Ridge Association Financial Report

By Cynthia Leeder, PRA Treasurer

While the first half of 2017 brought record rainfall, mudslides, and flooding, it also brought the PRA a tremendous first half-year in revenue. Due to the efforts of all our volunteers who worked so hard to put on our events, programs to date have been very successful. Backcountry Weekend alone brought in an amazing \$24,916, donations are holding pace, and visitor center sales are up over \$4,000 from the same time last year, leaving us in a great position. Volunteers, take a well deserved break and enjoy the summer. You earned it!

PRA balance sheet as of June 30, 2017:

|                            |                  |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Total bank accounts.....   | \$252,611        |
| Inventory assets.....      | \$62,078         |
| Marketable securities..... | <u>\$138,051</u> |
| Total assets.....          | \$452,740        |

Income and expenses January through June, 2017:

|                                 |                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Total donations.....            | \$32,422         |
| Visitor center sales.....       | \$29,422         |
| Membership dues.....            | \$1,825          |
| Investments.....                | \$558            |
| Program income.....             | <u>\$36,192</u>  |
| <b>Total income.....</b>        | <b>\$100,419</b> |
| Cost of goods sold.....         | <u>\$13,717</u>  |
| <b>Gross profit.....</b>        | <b>\$86,702</b>  |
| Interpretive program expenses.. | \$39,031         |
| Operations and other expenses.. | <u>\$20,096</u>  |
| <b>Total expenses.....</b>      | <b>\$59,127</b>  |
| <b>Net income.....</b>          | <b>\$27,575</b>  |



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Adam Escoto  
Paul Gillot  
Sue Harwager  
Ken Howell  
Stuart Organo, Supervising Ranger

### **PRA Volunteer Committee**

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Jen Naber, Volunteer Coordinator (shared)  
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Michael Hundt  
Kathryn Levine  
Allene Liebenberg  
John Thatcher  
Dave Waldrop

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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: October 31, 2017**

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