

# *The Ponderosa*

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



**Winter 2017**

## **Winter Rains Fill Coe Park Streams and Lakes**



Little Fork. Photo by Heather Ambler.



Bass Pond. Photo by Bonnie Daley.

### **Inside this issue:**

<i>Winter Rains</i>	1, 6
<i>Western Toad</i> by Joseph Belli	2, 3
<i>On Blue Ridge...</i> by Teddy Goodrich	4, 5
<i>Metric Time</i> by Barry Breckling	5
<i>News from the Board of the Pine Ridge Association.</i> by Daniel Benefiel	6, 7
<i>New PRA Members</i>	7
<i>2016 Coe Thanksgiving</i> by Allene Liebenberg	8
<i>News from the Volunteer Committee</i> by Manny Pitta	9
<i>On The Edge of The Wild</i> by Mike Meyer	10, 11
<i>Park Events and Information</i>	12

# Western Toad

By Joseph Belli

Toads, I've come to believe, suffer from an image problem especially in comparison to frogs, their closest kin. Frogs are cool and chic; toads are "meh" and whatever. Frogs come in an array of colors and patterns; toads are the color of dirt. Frogs leap, climb, dive, and swim; toads do none of those well, if at all. Frogs are Olympic athletes; toads are bowlers. Frogs are rock stars; toads are a barbershop quartet. If there was such a thing as amphibian high school, frogs would be the quarterback of the football team, while toads would be Napoleon Bonaparte. You don't need to watch American Graffiti to figure out which character was nicknamed toad; just look at the cast photos. The short guy with the pale complexion and horn-rimmed glasses, that's him. It sure the heck wasn't Harrison Ford. Even our fairytales and superstitions are biased. Kiss a frog, you might get a prince. Touch a toad, you might get warts. All the comparisons might leave you wondering: what are the differences between frogs and toads anyway?

Frogs and toads are Anurans, an amphibian order that arose 250 million years ago during the Triassic Period. And even though frogs and toads can be further divided into numerous families, surprisingly there's no real scientific distinction between the two. Toads, we're told, are a type of frog (rather than vice versa), but that doesn't address their differences.



Western Toad

The first and often the only difference that most people are aware of is skin texture. Frogs have smooth, moist skin, while toads have dry, bumpy skin. What we call warts are actually glands that secrete toxins to deter predators and while you won't develop warts after handling a toad you may experience irritation if you rub your eyes or put your fingers in your mouth.

Warts aside, other physical characteristics set frogs and toads apart. Frogs have streamlined bodies with tapered waists; toads have squat, compact bodies. The hind limbs of frogs are long and muscular; those of toads are short and poorly developed. Most frogs have webbed feet, while some have enlarged toe pads for climbing. Toads have little or no webbing on their feet and lack toe pads.

Frogs move by leaping, covering many times their body length each time they launch. Toads move by walking. When pressed, toads hop, but calling it jumping or leaping is an exaggeration. In water, the differences really stand out. Frogs dive with abandon and swim powerfully. True, some types of frogs, such as chorus frogs, don't take well to water but toads are even less aquatic, coming to water only to breed, sticking to the surface and the shallows.

I'll offer up another behavioral difference I didn't find in the scientific literature or in field guides, but trust me on this: pick up a frog and it will squirm mightily; pick up a toad and it will pee on you. Lovely.

At this point, you might be thinking that toads are nothing more than homely, out of shape frogs. The president would probably call them losers. But I ask you to look at them differently, as frogs that have taken the road less traveled. They've left the water behind, making a go of it on land in ways frogs never could and in places frogs would perish. Toads aren't second-rate frogs at all; in fact, you might say they're Superfrogs.

Their dry skin serves them well, allowing them to retain moisture in arid environments that would wither a frog. Those glands we call warts offer a degree of protection from predators for they exude a toxin that although not as potent as that of newts serves to deter many would-be attackers.

Continued on page 3...

## Western Toad, continued....

Toads may not leap or do much of anything quickly, but they're able to cover impressive distances by walking. One was found seven miles from its point of capture; I've never heard of a frog traveling that far. Toads tackle steep slopes and rugged terrain routinely. They may not ascend rock walls, but they can handle rough country.

Toads also dig, something frogs don't really do. Spadefoot Toads (family Scaphiophidae) are the best of the lot, digging specialists. They've evolved hardened projections on their hind feet to help them burrow, giving them their name. They can dig over a meter deep, allowing them to reach cooler soil, if not moisture, in the hot, arid lands they often occupy. Spadefoot Toads have adapted well to the desert, breeding immediately after rains and laying eggs that can hatch in less than a week and in some circumstances as little as one day. Their tadpoles also develop rapidly, in as little as two weeks under favorable conditions. In contrast, some frog species take over a year to transform, and those in high elevations may require three years.

Spadefoot Toads don't inhabit Coe Park. They're found to the east, on the floor of the Central Valley, and south, beyond Hollister. Within the park, Western Toads are the only kind we have.

Western Toads are widely distributed, ranging from the Pacific Coast to the Rockies. Though largely absent from the Southwest, they range north to southern Alaska and occupy a variety of habitats from sea level to alpine areas. They're fairly large—females can exceed five inches in length (female frogs and toads are significantly larger than males, possibly to carry a large number of eggs). Adults of both sexes have a thin, light stripe running down the length of the back.

Western Toads are primarily nocturnal, spending days in mammal burrows or those they excavate themselves. While lacking the "spade" of Spadefoot Toads, Western Toads have tubercles on their hind feet that serve the same function. They emerge from burrows at night and during wet weather.

Western Toads aren't picky when it comes to breeding habitat; they use ponds, streams, and a variety of man-made sources, although they prefer shallow waters with an open canopy. Unlike many other frogs and toads, male Western Toads lack a vocal sac and don't rely on calling to attract females. When they do make a sound, it's a weak chirp, often emitted when they're picked up. In central California they breed from late winter to early spring. Females lay eggs in lengthy strings rather than masses and those strings may contain thousands of eggs.

Western Toad tadpoles are easy to identify—they're black and small, just over an inch long, and tend to congregate in large schools in the shallows. Schooling may keep them safe from predators such as garter snakes while the warm shallow water allows for quick development. Tadpoles can transform in as little as two months, a big advantage in a drought year or in a small body of water. They transform synchronously, and on those occasions the shores of ponds are teeming with tiny toadlets less than half an inch long. Few survive long, but those that make it can live for a decade.

Despite their broad distribution, Western Toads have vanished or become scarce in some areas. In the Rocky Mountains, severe die-offs have occurred, with the primary culprit being chytrid fungus, an infectious skin disease that's devastated amphibian populations worldwide. In California, they've declined in the Sierra Nevada and have become rare in the Central Valley. In Coe Park their status is tricky to determine. They're found throughout the park and while not uncommon they don't appear to be plentiful either. It may simply be that they're harder to detect than frogs. Holed up underground, emerging at night, and silent—maybe they just keep a low profile. Toads may be onto something there. Stay out of the limelight. Let the frogs grab all the attention. It's not all it's cracked up to be. After all, when was the last time anyone dined on toad legs, or dissected a toad in biology class?



## *“On Blue Ridge a Black man took up a claim...”*

### *James Pickett, Pioneer*

By Teddy Goodrich, PRA Historian

Researching and writing about James Pickett's life was a history lesson for me not so much because of what it meant to be black in early California history but how difficult it was to find information that would provide a framework for his life and for the lives of other members of his family. Birth, marriage, death, and burial records are almost nonexistent. People appear and disappear without any record.

The 1880 Federal Census provided me with a street name and house number. I went to Sutter Creek to see if any remnant of the Pickett family's life there remained. I found the street and the place where the house once stood on the southern outskirts of town. The house was gone but the family's life there was like their life yet to be, living on the fringe of mainstream society.

“On Blue Ridge a Black man took up a claim on what we call tule spring. And he farmed on Blue Ridge. ...His plowshare is still there. It's a beautiful spring, [and] flat land.... He had a horse and a cow and a calf or two, and he raised the hay for them up there on Blue Ridge.” Sada Coe Robinson.

If it weren't for the sharp eyes of two volunteers exploring near the Rock House on Rock House Ridge, I never would have found the man Sada was referring to in a 1971 interview with a State Parks historian. The volunteers emailed me about some piping they found in what they believed was section 25, T8sR4e, and asked me “Was there a settler here?” A bit of research, and I had their man, James Augustus Pickett, born in Sutter Creek, California in 1864.

It didn't take long to find his family in Sutter Creek in the 1860 census of Amador County, or to discover that his older siblings were born in California shortly after the Gold Rush began. After more research, I found that James' mother, Angeline, was considered a black pioneer, having come to California in 1849. It is almost certain that Angeline and her husband Andrew Jackson Pickett came here from Missouri as slaves.

California was part of the Compromise of 1850 that allowed Missouri to come into the Union as a slave state, while California entered as a free state. The California Constitution, ratified in 1849, outlawed slavery but if you had been a slave it wasn't that simple. California had its share of pro-slavery politicians: southern-born men who wanted legal protection for slave owners who had taken their property into California before it became a state. In 1852 the California legislature passed the Fugitive Slave Law which allowed slave owners to take their slaves back to the South with them if they were brought to California before statehood. Blacks who fell into this category lived in a constant state of fear. Did the Pickett family fear for their freedom?

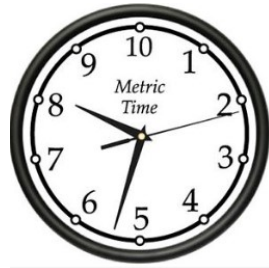
The family faced other challenges. They could not testify in court against Caucasians, and they could not attend public school.

The Fifteenth Amendment was ratified in 1870, giving voting rights to former slaves. James' father registered to vote on May 25, 1870, and continued to be a registered voter until his death in 1886. James and his brothers all registered to vote as soon as they reached voting age, eager to take part in a ritual that had been denied them for so long. Angeline and James' older sisters never learned to read or write, not that it mattered. To put things in perspective, women wouldn't have the right to vote for another fifty years.

The family scattered after their father's death, most eventually residing in San Mateo County. They took up positions where they could find acceptance in a predominately white society and became housekeepers, janitors, gardeners, and truck drivers. James became an upholsterer, married, was widowed, and died childless in San Mateo in 1936. Outside of a slim public record of censuses, voter registration, city directories, and a death record, there are no stories to give depth and color to his life—save one.

Continued on page 5...

## Metric Time



On January 1, 2020 the United States will be switching to metric time. Other nations are expected to follow. Metric measurements for weight, volume, length, distance, and temperature have long been used in other countries and by scientists worldwide. Adding metric time to the other metric measurements will be beneficial to all. Simply put, each minute will be divided into 100 seconds, each hour will be 100 minutes, each day will be 10 hours long, a week will have 10 days, each month will have 10 weeks, and each year will be 10 months long.

OK, OK, this is one of my wild ideas that just won't work. The French tried a type of metric time—of course, it's no longer in use. Although metric time is in no way practical, other metric measurements work very well and are much easier to use than the Imperial System we're using now. Let's see, 3 teaspoons equals a tablespoon, a cup is 8 fluid ounces, a pound is 16 ounces, a mile is 5,280 feet, a yard is three feet, a foot is 12 inches, but your yardstick can't easily get you a 10th of an inch but will give you an 8th. When the U.S. tried to have gasoline sold by the liter many years ago, that plan didn't last very long. The 15 gallons you previously saw on the pump was now over 56 liters. Dang! 56 liters has to cost more than 15 gallons.

I didn't become familiar with the metric system until I went to college where I found it being used in all my science classes. Now we are constantly using millimeters, centimeters, decimeters, and meters in our botanical work. And that's easy to work with and just makes sense. The whole system is a decimal system where smaller measurements are divided by ten and larger measurements are multiplied by ten. It's also based on one of the most common things on this earth—water. One cubic centimeter of water is one centimeter wide on each side and it weighs one gram. One hundred centimeters is one meter and 1,000 meters is a kilometer. A thousand cubic centimeters is one liter. One thousand grams is a kilogram. For us, water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit and boils at 212 degrees Fahrenheit (at sea level) but for metric users, water freezes at 0 degrees Celsius and boils at 100 degrees Celsius.

Even if you don't buy a kilogram of potatoes at the market or run a kilometer in under four minutes, you might start looking at milliliters and grams on food containers and in recipes and find a better method of measuring. And don't forget daylight savings time on Sunday March 8th, 2020 when you'll need to set your clock forward 100 metric minutes.

### *On Blue Ridge a Black man took up a claim....", continued...*

On February 26, 1887, shortly after his father's death, he settled on a 160-acre preemption claim on Rock House Ridge. He built a small redwood cabin and furnished it with a table and chairs, a bed, dishes, and cooking utensils. With a plow and harrow and some small farm tools, he cleared land for a garden and hay field, cleaned out the spring, and fenced in five acres where he kept thirty head of cattle and two horses. Henry Coe witnessed for him when he proved up on his claim.

James Pickett took a chance. He put aside the expectations of what the world saw when it looked at him. By 1890, he had moved back to San Mateo County to be near his siblings. We don't know why he left but very likely loneliness was a factor. What we do know is that for a brief time he too was a pioneer.

## News from the Board of the Pine Ridge Association

By Daniel Benefiel, President, PRA Board

The board of the Pine Ridge Association met on January 10th, 2017. The agenda included the financial report (Cynthia Leeder), volunteer committee updates (Manny Pitta), and Gilroy Yamato Hot Springs updates (Robert Method).

The board discussed candidates for the 2016 volunteer of the year award and selected Michael Hundt who has been a volunteer since 2013. Mike has done extensive outreach work including advertising Coe Park at external events, organizing interpretive hikes and talks through meetup.com, and for securing a \$10,000 grant from the California State Parks Foundation for the white barn restoration. Thank you and congratulations, Michael!

The board also discussed the board election, which was still in progress at that time. The votes are in now and we are happy to report that Steve McHenry will remain on the board and that we have two new members, Paul Gillot and Sue Harwager. Welcome, Paul and Sue! We also needed to fill the seat of Mark Medeiros who resigned to focus on other endeavors. The board is happy to announce that Adam Escoto will complete the remaining year of Mark's term. Welcome, Adam!

The board authorized up to \$1,000 for new batteries for the PRA radios which we use at most of our events.

The board discussed the park website, coepark.net. Several features of the website had broken recently, which required that some scripts be rewritten. This will be an ongoing problem as we sorely need to upgrade the infrastructure for compatibility and security. The look and feel will likely remain the same. Manny will come to the March meeting with a specific proposal.

The board noted that Coe Park will celebrate 60 years in 2018 and we should begin gathering ideas for a birthday party.

The board is discussing a proposal to create a database of PRA and non-PRA contacts and use a service such as Mail Chimp to send news, event notifications, and periodic requests for support. This would be a way to reach out especially to nonmembers, maintain their interest in the park, draw them to events, entice them to become members, and have them as resources when appropriate. Please let me know if you're interested in working this project.

Continued on page 7.....



Hunting Hollow. Photo by Sue Dekalb.



Hunting Hollow Waterfall.

Photo by Sue Dekalb.

## News from the Board of the Pine Ridge Association, continued...

The board updated status on projects authorized in 2016:

- Bob Patrie, Patricia Clark-Gray (District Interpretive Specialist), Cynthia Leeder, Paul Liebenberg, and others are collaborating on creating and building a new relief map of the park to replace the one currently in the visitor center. The new model will cover the entire park and will have satellite imagery plus some labels (ridges, roads, and canyons). At 6 feet long and 5 feet 5 inches wide, the model would have a scale of 1:15,368 (larger than the current park map at 1:24,000). As an alternative experience given that the visitor center is not ADA accessible, Bob is working on a tablet-based 3D model using Google Earth to view the park with automated tours and flyovers.
- Endangered Animals coloring books have been reprinted.
- Work on a panel showing the peaks of the Quien Sabe Volcanic Field to the south is in progress.
- Purchase of new audiovisual equipment is in progress.

The board's officers were appointed and remain the same:

Daniel Benefiel, president  
 Peter Coe Verbica, vice president  
 Steve McHenry, secretary  
 Cynthia Leeder, treasurer

Finally, the board thanked Ron Erskine for many years of service to the board as president and vice president and as one of our most thoughtful and outspoken members. Many thanks for all your contributions over the years, Ron!

The board meets bimonthly at 6:30pm at the Gilroy Public Library. All PRA members are welcome to attend. The next meetings will be held on Tuesday March 14th and Tuesday May 9th.

## 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. If you have chosen to receive *The Ponderosa* electronically and, for some reason, it is undeliverable, we will send the next issue via U.S. mail.

William Rose, Redwood Estates	Aunica Cole, San Jose
Dale Wilson, Aptos	Marlene Mirassou and Steve Houlihan, Aptos
Albertine Combs, Pleasanton	Bill Olson, San Jose
Reed Thayer, Sacramento	L. Steven Goldblatt
Craig Jennings, Oakland	Jim Loweecey and Lilia Kilmer
John Jenkins, Morgan Hill	

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



## 2016 Coe Thanksgiving

By Allene Liebenberg

Volunteers and staff at Coe Park really know how to celebrate Thanksgiving! As usual, the potluck dinner was held at Coe Park headquarters in the newly reroofed white barn. The food was absolutely delicious: turkeys, ham, pies, veggies, and every dish imaginable were laid out on the tables. No one left hungry, that was for sure. It's always wonderful to catch up on all the year's events and projects with fellow volunteers, talk about their insightful and creative ideas, and natter and catch up.

The new roof was great; no more dripping rain water on Thanksgiving tables. Perhaps that's why we took special care this year in decorating the barn. Thank you to everyone for your help. We had lights in the barn rafters (Bruce Rideout), mini electric candles and mini lights (Rosemary Rideout), and fall colored wreaths. Ranger John brought the pumpkins and I brought the wreaths and the dried flower table centerpieces, which added the finishing touch.

I'm always inspired by the work volunteers put into Pine Ridge Association events. Sue Dekalb organized the Thanksgiving at Coe Park again this year. Chris Weske, Jodie Keahey, Ted Tawshunsky, Art Pon, Don Clare, and others set up the tables. Afterwards, we had a crew of dish washers: Kelly Kersten and Rob, Dan and Keiko Olsen, Marla Zayad, and Sue who didn't seem to mind the pouring rain. Barbara Bessey volunteered to wash tablecloths.

We really know how to celebrate Thanksgiving and make the day special, and I know we're all looking forward to next year's celebration. Thank you to everyone for your participation and for all your help!!



New roof, fall decorations, great venue!

Photo by Paul Liebenberg.



Fabulous food, drink, and friends!

Photo by Paul Liebenberg



# News from the Volunteer Committee

By Manny Pitta, Chair, Volunteer Committee

It's been a busy time for the volunteer committee. During our first meeting of 2017 we reviewed, with Bill Frazer's valuable assistance, the 2016 report of volunteer hours. One of the tasks for the committee was to identify volunteers eligible for the following awards:

- Statewide VIP passes
- Monterey District passes
- Visitor service awards
- 1000 increment awards
- 10, 20, and 30 year pins
- Advancement to volunteer or senior volunteer

The volunteers who reached these milestones were acknowledged and presented with the awards by volunteer committee members during the PRA annual meeting. We also identified volunteers who fell short of the required 50 hours per year so that State Park staff could follow up with them. One statistic to note is that the total volunteer hours for the year grew by more than 1,000, reaching nearly 18,500 hours!

In preparation for the PRA annual meeting, the committee selected and procured the visitor service award, which this year was a multitool with an embedded LED flashlight. This award was given to 40 volunteers who put in 48 or more hours directly interacting with park visitors. The remainder of the awards, name badges, park passes, and plaques were procured by Bill Frazer, Ranger Cameron Bowers, and Ranger John Verhoeven. Volunteer directories and parking tags were produced and distributed by Dave Flack and Allene Liebenberg.

The committee discussed options for the rain-delayed volunteer raining ride-along. Ranger Cameron Bowers selected the weekend of April 1st and 2nd for the training event. The committee is now engaged in planning the event along with an added volunteer training event, Spring CoeEd Day on March 11th.

On the topic of casual volunteer shirts, the committee discussed offering them in tan/khaki per a request from park staff. In order to do so, the selection will be limited to two or three styles. John Thatcher will continue to lead the effort to manage the shirt sales and delivery. The item will be on the next committee agenda to set a schedule for online sales.

With the Coe Backcountry Weekend coming up at the end of April, Dave Waldrop began looking into the status of State Park and PRA-owned radios. He found that some of the radio batteries needed replacement to ensure adequate volunteer communications during the event. The PRA has since allocated funds for new radio batteries.

The calendar of park events is filling up nicely. There is a mix of activities scheduled in the park in addition to outreach events at local venues. See [coepark.net](http://coepark.net) and the Meetup page ([meetup.com/Henry-Coe-State-Park-Outdoors-Meetup/](http://meetup.com/Henry-Coe-State-Park-Outdoors-Meetup/)) for upcoming events.

Volunteer committee meetings are held bi-monthly on the first Wednesday of the month. Everyone is welcome to attend. The next two meetings will be on March 1st and May 3rd. Contact any volunteer committee member for details. You'll find the list of volunteer committee members on the last page of each issue of *The Ponderosa*.

## On the Edge of Wild

By Mike Meyer

I wasn't getting anywhere, just walking. It was cold and I was tired going up the ridge, it seemed a long way up from the canyon. I panted and blew out air in bursts. I looked over at the sky-fill above the valley off past the next ridge. It was big and had a cool shade of gray, smooth-white gray. Almost smooth. I looked all around in a circle, all the horizons, to see if it smoothed a little more but it was all slightly unsmooth and with small clouds like burps set in the different regions here and there, they changed the pure color and added depth. It was high and I thought if a jet came by it would be underneath them.

At the big tree on the road near the bench above the turnoff to Poverty Flat, a big branch hung directly over where I walked. It was fat and came 40 feet out from the trunk parallel to the ground, and I wondered if it was going to fall on me. I walked past the trunk. There were four other big limbs also parallel and running way out massively, they were gnarled with thick chunky bark, crazy strong.

I was glad I was on this walk then. I had seen the canyons from half way down the China Hole trail where you could see over the low side of the chaparral. The big slopes of trees down from the ridges in the west, jammed full of trees a thousand feet from top to bottom, it seemed, five miles of it down to the south, and northward wrapping around up under Cordoza Ridge, and the other way into the Narrows. South, the creek in there where it was purely Coyote Creek and not some fork, it called up tinnily—a thin musical sound, it was thick and white, dull white in there and just a line from my elevation. With a bump in the adrenalin I wondered how it would be when I got down in there.

The trail was wide through the chaparral and I thought of Sam's work making it so nice like that and also about why the chaparral wasn't growing back over the trail, it stayed back! And how he had carted rock to different sections and placed chunks in the low edges and filled it in with dirt and now with just their rock tops showing seeing how they still held up the trail after a few years and thinking the man did all the hikers and bikers a big service.

When finally the trail had me past the last switchback and I was on the last leg, which is above the creek, I could see how fat and unruly all that water was. It was coffee with cream. At China Hole between the two big rocks it was so full, its cheeks were pushed way way out, it was fattishly fat. You only saw the tops of the rocks now, and the high water line from a day or two ago where the grass was laid over and pointing downstream was too high to believe, it was higher than the China Hole Trail signpost by two feet.

I ate my lunch on a nice rock set in an eddy on the edge. Just up from there the creek was rioting in knocking down the furniture rage, so jammed in there between the rocks and banks, it jumped and slashed and kicked to get loose, and below where the channel ran deeper it flowed fast through chutes and the old placid places and then went on down racing on down, down like a blind river toward the big turn to the south.

I greeted three young guys who had come around from Poverty Flat on the Creekside Trail. They were wet half way up their ribs, and I felt responsible because I'd sent them down Poverty Flat Road earlier from the visitor center. It turned out they'd had to cross the creek, it was so full that it pushed them up the canyon wall into wads of poison oak, and so they'd crossed all that water in the Middle Fork to escape poison oak, and I half envied them.

"I wasn't sure at one point if I would make it," one of them said looking out. I apologized for sending them on that route, but they were good natured, and another one of them let me off the hook. "It was no problem," he said and laughed. "We should be thanking you!" All smiling, all of them, and I understood, having been a kid not that long ago and remembering the adventures possible when you just did things as they came up because you knew you probably could.

Continued on page 11.....

## On the Edge of Wild      continued....

When they had moved on, a 30s couple came by. They were very excited to be down for a look-see on this wild thing of a creek from their Manzanita Point camp. They were spending the night up there, with a forecast of wind and heavy rain. They would return tomorrow to photograph the creek with all the new water on top of the water level we were seeing now. I saluted their great fortune and pluck and wished them a great but safe ride on the wilds of the storm. They were the only backpackers in the park that day that we knew of at the visitor center.

Now winding up my walk, I kept seeing the light in the lightish gray sky, I was reminded of some experience that stayed below, from an earlier time. It was a sense of something just out of reach. I would touch if I could, I wanted what it was but it stayed coolly away and only hinted at itself. I knew it was no good to reach and it was O.K. I had plenty inside me to chew on now, enough to hold me for a while.



Frog Lake. Photo by Heather Ambler.



Manzanita Point Rd. Photo by Bonnie Daley.



## Park Events and Information

Mark your calendars—important dates and other announcements

Also visit [www.coepark.net](http://www.coepark.net) for more information about all activities.

### Trail Work Days

Saturday, February 25

Saturday, March 25

For more information, please call Chere at 408-683-2247 or visit [www.coepark.net](http://www.coepark.net).

### Raincoats and Rubber Boots

Saturday, March 4, 10:00am at the Hunting Hollow entrance, rain or shine. We'll hike down the creek, have a scavenger hunt, perhaps enjoy a boat race (toy boats furnished) or a duck race. Bring a picnic lunch. For more information, please call Chere at 408-683-2247 or Kitty at 408-842-6215, or visit [www.coepark.net](http://www.coepark.net).

### Wildflower Ride (bring your own horse)

Saturday, April 8. Please visit [www.coepark.net](http://www.coepark.net) for more information.

### Coe Backcountry Weekend

Friday, April 28 through Sunday, April 30. Check the park website, [www.coepark.net](http://www.coepark.net), in early February.

### Mother's Day Breakfast

Sunday, May 14. For more details and to buy tickets, visit [www.coepark.net](http://www.coepark.net) in April.

### Anza-Gilroy Hot Spring Tour for Equestrians

Saturday, May 6. Meet time is 9am at the Coyote Creek entrance (2 miles past Hunting Hollow). MUST RSVP, limited parking. Gate will be locked at 9:30 am and during event, so don't be late, and don't plan on an early departure. Event will end around 3 pm. Bring lunch and water for yourself. For more information, please call Chere at 408-683-2247 or Kitty at 408-842-6215, or visit [www.coepark.net](http://www.coepark.net)

### Ranch Day

Saturday, May 20, 10:00am-3:00pm at Hunting Hollow (rain date June 3). For more information, please call Chere at 408-683-2247 or Kitty at 408-842-6215, or visit [www.coepark.net](http://www.coepark.net).

### Coe Campout for Equestrians and Hikers

Friday, May 26 through Monday, May 29. Please visit [www.coepark.net](http://www.coepark.net) for more information.

### Coe Park Meetup group

Coe Park meetup group is growing. Don't miss the guided hikes and other fun activities. Join today at: [www.meetup.com/Henry-Coe-State-Park-Outdoors-Meetup](http://www.meetup.com/Henry-Coe-State-Park-Outdoors-Meetup).

# Thank You, Heather

By Libby Vincent



Thank you, Heather! Heather Ambler has worked for a lot of years as publisher of The Ponderosa and has decided to step aside and pursue other interests at the park. I have enjoyed the dickens out of working with Heather, will miss our close collaboration on this effort, and wish Heather heaps of good things and much lollygagging in the years ahead. Thank you, Heather, for all your outstanding work on The Ponderosa!

Sue Harwager has kindly stepped forward to work on publishing The Ponderosa and I'm looking forward to working with her. Thank you, Sue!

## PRA Publications

When was the last time you browsed through the PRA publications in the visitor center? Whether you're a new or a wise and experienced volunteer, there's a wealth of information to be gleaned from these pamphlets and books and shared with park visitors.

We thought we would share a sample of some of these publications in each issue of The Ponderosa so you know what you're missing.

If you attended the PRA annual meeting on February 4th, you heard some great stories from retired Park Ranger Barry Breckling and there are many more in his book "From Under My Brim: Stories from the California Coast Range" that you'll likely enjoy. Here's an excerpt from one of Barry's stories, Something Stinks in Here, from this book:

*I enjoy writing stories that well up from the depths of my imagination, but as the old saying goes, "Truth is stranger than fiction," and ain't it the truth. The events described in this story really happened, and besides, it would be hard to spin a yarn as far-fetched and fragrant.*

*On your first day of work at a park with pit toilets, you can be sure that you'll be expected to learn the fine art of cleaning them. I got toilet trained on my first day as a Mt. Diablo park aid, and so did Dede Villareal on her first day as a park aid at Coe Park. Dede's training was a little more complicated than mine though, as things turned out.*

*To digress for a moment, ever since I started in parks, I've wondered why we call those wooden enclosures "pit toilets." "Outhouse" isn't a very inviting name either, but it beats the heck out of pit toilet. When I think of a pit I think of something you catch wild animals in.*

That's all we'll give you. If you want to know how this story plays out, you'll have to read it in Barry's book, which is available for purchase in the Coe Park visitor center or the California State Park's on-line store at <https://store.parks.ca.gov/publications/?cat=24&p=2>.



Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Morgan Hill, CA  
Permit No. 160

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

408-779-2728

---

### **PRA Board of Directors**

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

### **PRA Volunteer Committee**

Cameron Bowers, Volunteer Coordinator  
Manny Pitta, Chair  
Ken Howell  
Michael Hundt  
Kathryn Levine  
Allene Liebenberg  
John Thatcher  
Dave Waldrop

### **Contributors for this issue**

Sue Harwager, publisher  
Libby Vincent, editor  
Heather Ambler, photographer  
Joseph Belli, author, photographer  
Daniel Benefiel, author  
Barry Breckling, author  
Bonnie Daley, photographer  
Sue Dekalb, photographer  
Teddy Goodrich, author  
Allene Liebenberg, author  
Paul Liebenberg, photographer  
Mike Meyer, author  
Manny Pitta, author

### **Mailing & Distribution**

John Thatcher  
Sue Harwager, e-distribution

*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: April 30, 2017**

© 2017 The Pine Ridge Association