



The CSPRA

Wave

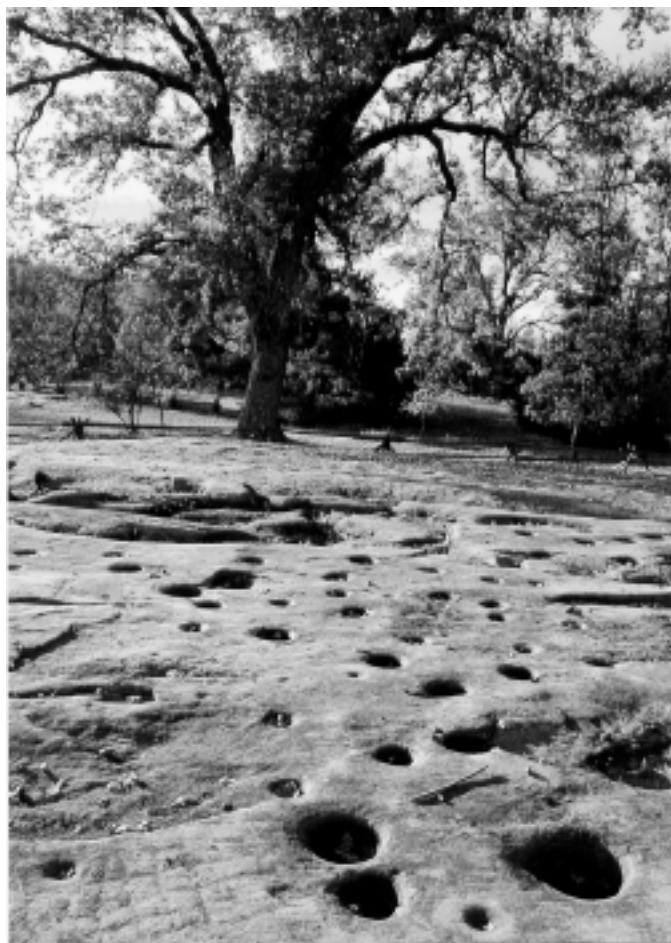
Newsletter

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 5

CALIFORNIA STATE PARK RANGERS ASSOCIATION

SEPT-OCT 2005

BIG TREES...



...BIG TIMES





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The CSPRA Wave
(ISSN0087-9176)
is published by CSPRA, P.O. Box 247,
Carpinteria, CA 93014-0247
Articles and letters are always welcome.
All submissions become the property of
CSPRA and may be edited without notice.

COVER PHOTOS: *Indian Grinding
Rock SP* by **Ken McKowen**; *Calaveras
Big Trees SP* by **David Carle**; *tent
camp at Columbia SP Diggins' event*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



RON BREAN
CSPRA President

What Really Counts?

There seems to be a bit of a theme developing in my life lately. I count animals. Now I know that some might think it a little strange, but it works for me on a number of levels. In fact, the more I think about it, the more it seems to be a practical metaphor for what park professionals have pursued for years. Perhaps I should explain.

After helping to finish up a census of oyster catchers in our "backyard" along the Oregon Coast for researchers at Oregon State University, my wife and I headed south to count other creatures. For eleven years now, my spouse, counting partner and CSPRA's Executive Manager (all the same person – **Laura Svendsgaard**) and I have traveled to Anza Borrego Desert State Park in early July. It is the hottest, driest period of the year, an ideal time to sit out in the desert and scan the harsh terrain for the illusive peninsular bighorn sheep. We're veterans, but there are some who have been at it much longer than we have. **Past CSPRA President Bud Getty** has done it for more than 30 years. Back home we missed a blue grass festival, a home town parade, a number of special events and the Fourth of July fireworks, and it was a cool 110 degrees in the shade when we turned in our count results. But, like most of the other counters,

we'll be back next year.

At the other end of the same month and at the other end of the same state I joined CSPRA member and retired Superintendent **Rick Sermon** on another count. Along with 30+ volunteers we traveled into the watershed affecting Jedediah Smith Redwoods and Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Parks. Here the environment and the counting task was more apt to cause hypothermia than heat stroke. We donned full wetsuits complete with hoods, neoprene gloves and booties, a mask and snorkel and swam a couple of miles of the Smith River. Attempting to keep abreast with the rest of the team in the differing currents and eddies, groups of 4 or 5 counters drifted and stroked and bumped and tumbled down runs and rapids while searching the depths and the shallows and the underwater ledges for the finned inhabitants of one of California's purest water-courses.

If you've bothered to read this far, many of you are probably thinking that you've elected a lunatic as your CSPRA president. You may be right, but let me get to the metaphor. I have no hesitation about participating in this sort of adventure. I find great satisfaction in sighting, recognizing, recording, and observing wild creatures in the places they live. The fact that I couldn't survive long in the environments these creatures call home somehow makes it all the more appealing. The animals, and their habitat, are what really counts.

Consider the peninsular bighorn sheep. They have been assaulted by diseases borne by domestic animals, loss of habitat to development, probably increased predation due to reduced habitat for mountain lions, and man-caused changes in the availability of water. They carve out a living in harsh terrain, among plants that seem to have evil designs on any bare flesh that comes near, without plentiful water, and in temperatures

*See **PRESIDENT** on page 14*

I HEAR THE CALL!

by **Dave Gould**, Sector Supt >>

Robert Louis Stevenson was once quoted as saying "If a man loves the labour of his trade, apart from any question of success or fame, the gods have called him." If this be the case, I surely have been called, for I have the fortune of being the Sector Superintendent of the most incredibly diverse and wonderful grouping of State Parks and staff in all of California.

The Calaveras Sector features eight different State Parks (in eight different counties, mind you!) in the very heart of California. Five of the parks lie in the Sierra foothills. From north to south they are: **Indian Grinding Rock SHP** near Jackson, **Calaveras Big Trees SP** (everybody should know where this park is located!), **Columbia SHP** in the heart of the Mother Lode, the **California State Mining and Mineral Museum** in Mariposa, and **Wassama Round House SHP** near the small town of Awhannee in northern Madera County. Three parks of the Sector are located in the great central valley:

Turlock Lake SRA (site of this year's fall CSPRA "Retiree's Rendezvous"), **Caswell Memorial SP**, and lowly **Bethany Reservoir SRA**. Thinking of all these parks makes me realize how fortunate I am to be involved in their operation, for each and every one has unique qualities and interesting challenges. As you read the articles in this edition of The CSPRA Wave focusing on the five Sierra foothill parks in the Calaveras Sector, you will have the chance to become acquainted with my work-a-day world. And I can tell you, there is never a dull moment!

The most recent Department reorganization significantly changed the way three former Districts were aligned. The old Calaveras, Four



Rivers, and San Joaquin Districts were combined into one mega-District with its headquarters in Columbia. Out of this new "Central Valley District" were created four Sectors, the Calaveras being one of them. And after the dust had settled with the personnel changes, I was lucky enough to be in the position of Calaveras Sector Superintendent. And my life has not been the same since! And I mean that in a good way, as I really enjoy each of the Sector's park units and the many challenges (well most of them) I face daily. I wanted to share with you one aspect of my job as Sector Superintendent that I really enjoy, amongst the endless list of things I get (have!) to do.

One of the more unique and enjoyable opportunities I have in the Calaveras Sector is being involved with the planning for three new Visitor Centers, all at very different stages of the process. At Calaveras Big Trees SP we are nearing the construction phase of the much-awaited new Visitor Center to be built between the large Day Use parking lot and the Campfire Center. Together

with the Calaveras Big Trees Association, we have worked with staff from the Northern Service Center to come up with a building design. With considerations for site slope, snow loading and removal, ADA, major donor wishes, operation issues, and of course budget, it seemed to me that the building almost designed itself! But we have an approved plan and if all goes well, ground-breaking should occur after the snow melts in the spring of 2006.

A long awaited Museum/Visitor Center is also in the works for the California State Mining & Mineral Museum in Mariposa. The present day Museum is located in a rented facility two miles out of town at the Mariposa County Fairgrounds. It has been the plan for many years now to build a new museum right in the town of Mariposa. The "Fund for the Preservation of the California State Mining & Mineral Museum" (FUND for short) is a group of local citizens working with a Federal HUD grant to do some major fund raising to make a new museum possible. The FUND has retained the services of an executive secretary and a professional fund raiser. A local family has offered to donate seven acres of land for a building site and an architectural firm was hired to draw up the plans for quite an impressive building. If all goes well, we can move the State's rock and mineral collection, including the huge Fricot Nugget, into a new home in a few years!

And the third Visitor Center plan is for Columbia SHP. This work is in the very preliminary stages. The present General Plan for Columbia SHP was completed in 1978 and as you could guess is somewhat out-of-date. Meetings proposing appropriate

See THE CALL, page 11

A RANGER'S PERSPECTIVE

by *Jeff Davis, Ranger*

Assignment: Write about your park from your perspective
Assignment Date: Some time in May or June
Due Date: August 5, 2005
Today's Date: August 6, 2005

How does this happen? In June, I was waiting for inspiration. In July, I was trying to force a theme to emerge. In August, well, it was August...and all that August is in a traditional camping park. Yesterday the Superintendent suggested I e-mail him something by Monday. Now that's inspiration!

0800 hrs: Start of shift. Collect the weather data from the NWS station. 86 was the high yesterday, it got down to 59 last night and it is currently 64 degrees with scattered clouds.

0830 hrs: Check in at the entrance station, the visitor center, the ranger station. Check the AED, the Unit Journal, the message board, and the interpretive calendar.

0855 hrs: Who's in campsite #53? ...check it out.

0900 hrs: Camp check Oak Hollow. Everyone is where they're supposed to be. No bear sightings last night. This news receives mixed reviews from the campers. Some still want to feed the teddy. One WOV for food storage and rubbish in the fire ring. That ground squirrel thought he had reached Nirvana.

1015 hrs: Back in North Grove. Maybe I can try to write something... Kiosk and Visitor Center need change. Saturday morning, everybody has twenties from the ATM.

1030 hrs: Jr. Rangers want Ranger trading cards. Sorry for the disruption to your program Jaime.

1045 hrs: Ranger office. Finish that report, then the newsletter article.

1155 hrs: Back to Oak Hollow for
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the due outs. Yep, all out or re-upped for another night.

1230 hrs: Kiosk is out of quarters for the showers. Must have clean campers...I don't usually have to dump the shower meters till Sunday.

1300 hrs: That'll hold 'em for awhile. I have got to get to this article...

1350 hrs: Calaveras Big Trees State Park is a special place. How can I forget, as often as people tell me so. And "Man, you have a great job." "I was gonna do that but the money..." or "Parks weren't hiring at the time..."

According to pollen samples taken from area meadows, Giant Sequoias have been only growing in this location for about 4500 years. That's only two life spans. It feels like they have always been here. Ancestors of Giant Sequoias were among the dominant plants when dinosaurs were the dominant animals. They covered much of the Northern Hemisphere's land surface.

The trees that our visitors want to hug today have seen a lot of seasons in their lifetimes. I imagine most of

them had settled into a nice routine, (something I can't seem to do), by the time Augustus T. Dowd blundered into the North Grove in search of a wounded grizzly bear in 1852. You're probably wondering about the sanity of a man who chases wounded grizzly bears for a living. Mr. Dowd was responsible for providing fresh meat for the workers of the Union Water Company as they worked to build a ditch/flume/canal to the gold diggings in Murphys Flat. While Dowd was not the first man to see a Giant Sequoia, he may have been the most colorful. He told the story of his encounter with the trees when he got back to camp that night. Since he had forgotten about the bear, I'm guessing that there was no meat in camp that night. Consequently, no one had anything better to do than listen to Dowd's story of the trees while they ate their beans. It took some convincing, but Dowd finally got the men to take the hike up to the big trees.

Within a year word had spread so far and wide that the Calaveras Big Trees had become a leading tourist attraction. The largest tree in the grove was cut down and dismembered so that it could be put on display. The pieces were shipped to New York where they burned in a warehouse. The tree was destroyed to prove it existed. The stump was planed off smooth and used as a dance floor, telegraph office and school room, while the remains of the fallen log were used as a bowling alley and saloon. Promoters and marketers must have ruled the day. A couple years later the second largest tree was stripped of its bark, killing the tree, so that the bark could be put on display. That tree still stands, a monument... to... any number of things.

1415 hrs: Camphost #1 is barbecuing corn on the cob... ready to eat in 10 minutes. Come and get it! Oh all right,

See CALAVERAS, page 7

LITTLE TREES STATE PARK

by **Darren T. Cooke**, Ranger

“Where’s the Big Stump?” “Is this the park with the drive-through tree?” “Where’s the bowling-alley tree?”

Anyone working at one of California’s State Park treasures can attest to answering the same questions over and over again about the highlighted feature of their particular unit. For us, the Sierra Redwood or Giant Sequoia, is the magnet that pulls visitors from around the world to our park. I can’t say I blame them. With their massive girth and limbs the size of other full-grown trees, the



noticed before, or reminded that sometimes it’s the little things that matter. For example, besides the

Giant Sequoias, Big Trees is full of astounding “little trees” (some of our sugar pines boast heights of over two-hundred feet). Some of our other “little trees” include ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, white fir, incense cedar, western juniper,

western yew, blue elderberry, big leaf maple, hazelnut, and manzanita to name a few. Each of these plants has a story to tell, from the jams and flutes that the Miwok make from the Elderberry, to the snowy white bracts of our springtime dogwoods, you could spend a lifetime revealing the secrets of this 6,500 acre wonderland.

sequoias are not to be missed. In fact, they’re awe inspiring. But as I watch the visitors crane their necks to look at these towers, and then immediately drive to their next destination (I’m also guilty here), I can’t avoid the sinking feeling that they are not seeing the forest for things other than these giant trees.

Those of us who work in parks on a daily basis are fortunate enough to discover some of the hidden treasures of the unit we work in. At Calaveras Big Trees State Park, the treasures abound.

On any given day, as I rush from camp check to camp check, I am surprised by something I’ve never

With Big Tree Creek, Big Trees Creek, Beaver Creek, the North Fork of the Stanislaus River, and a myriad of springs, water abounds at the park and provides ample opportunity for fishing, sunbathing, river-rafting and swimming.

Or what about the thousands of ladybugs that cluster and then disperse and take flight in massive orange clouds

that move through our meadows amongst our Sierra wildflowers?

Or the way your snowshoes sound as you walk through an otherwise quiet snow storm amongst the giant sequoias on a moonlit night?

What ignored treasures abound at your park?

Here’s your assignment: Pick up your field guides and flip to the last pages. (You know the spot. It’s the page with the little check box for every bird, bug, tree, flower, fish, squirrel or rock that you’ve ever seen. It’s the page that wrongly teaches us that because you’ve seen something and checked it off, that you know it and are ready to move on to the next box). Now, do as a wise teacher once demanded of me, and rip the pages out. Then, go out to discover your park’s other treasures.

Between clogged toilets, stacks of reports, arrests, and dwindling money and staff, you’ll hear the same daily questions you always hear, and you’ll inwardly smile. And maybe, just maybe, you’ll find yourself sharing your park’s hidden secrets.

....But then again, you might have to do it on your day off.



A DREAM JOB AT IGR

by *Steven Walloupe, Ranger*

There could not be a better time to write about Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park than the fall. To the Miwok people who have lived on the Western slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountains for untold centuries, this time of the year will let them know their fate for the rest of the coming year. You see, fall is the gathering time for acorns, which will be the Miwok people's staple diet for the coming year. Fall is a time to celebrate and thank the creator and the mighty oaks for supplying your food source. It is a time to acknowledge nature and your place within it and to thank the earth for allowing you, along with everyone else and every living thing to exist and to be healthy and happy. Every fall is the time of the year for a Big Time. This is the Miwok way of seeing the world. It has been this way for thousands of years and continues today for some.

The annual Big Time celebration is held on the weekend following the fourth Friday in September every year. This year, it will fall on the 24th and 25th of September. This may seem like an odd way of setting the date for the celebration, but in 1968, Governor Ronald Reagan declared the fourth Friday in September of every year as American Indian Day in an official resolution. Therefore, the Big Time at the park has followed this day since the Ceremonial Round House was built here in 1974.

Big Time is the park's largest event and will draw thousands of visitors over the two days that it is held. It is also held in high regard by many California Indian people and some will travel great distances just to

attend the event. Many will come as visitors and many will come as participants. Traditional, ceremonial dancing in the Round House is by far the highlight of Big Time. Dancers will come from all over central California and practice centuries old ceremonies, day and night for the



duration of the Big Time event.

This year's Big Time will be the first that I will be expected to fill two roles here at the park. You see, I am of Miwok descent and my ancestors have lived in this very part of California for unknown centuries. I am also one of the traditional dancers that call this Round House home, so I have a certain responsibility to my Dance Captain and to the spirits that I honor when I dance. At the same time though, I am the unit Ranger for the park and have a responsibility to my job and to the people who have entrusted me to take care of this park. I will be asked to make sure that the event goes smoothly and to make sure that everyone in the park is safe. At the same time I will be asked

"why aren't you dancing?" "Where are your feathers, why don't you just go take all of that (Ranger Uniform) stuff off and just come down to the Round House and dance?"

The summer after I graduated high school, I was hired by California Indian Manpower Consortium to work on the reconstruction of the Round House here at the park. Two years later I was hired as a seasonal maintenance park aide, then promoted to a Guide Trainee working in the park museum. In 1999 I left Indian Grinding Rock and took on my first permanent position as a Guide I at the State Capitol Museum.

For many years, my grandfather was the chairman of the Amador Tribal Council, now known as the Sierra Native American Council, which sponsors and puts on Big Time. He was also a very active docent at the park and sat on the board of the Chaw'se Indian Grinding Rock Association. He was once rewarded with the California State Parks Superior Achievement Award for his dedication and hard work as a volunteer. He passed away about four years ago.

While my gramps was still alive he once told me that he had a dream about me. He said that in his dream he saw me working at the park and my name was on the office door. I laughed and told him that "my name was already on the door of the office upstairs and it said Steven Walloupe-Guide Trainee." He said "no, in my dream your name was on the Ranger's door." When I walked into the museum for the first time and saw that brass sign that says "Steven Walloupe - Park Ranger" I knew that my gramps had a smile on his face over in that spirit world.

INVALUABLE REAL ESTATE

by Peggy Ronning, Curator I

"Cal-Rea'l Realtors Presents a unique offering! A three bedroom main house with garage, a guest house, Big Beautiful 4 stall horse barn, AND a genuine Indian Cemetery PLUS an authentic Indian Round House, circa 1905 – one of the two in existence in the State. All this nestled among huge live oak trees, just 1 hour from Fresno."

This real estate listing was the call to action in the late 1970s. This Miwuk-Chuckchansi Round House, located between Mariposa and Oakhurst in the Central Sierra Nevada, fell into private hands in the 1950s when it was sold to a rancher, who used it as a chicken coop. Here at last was the descendants' chance to reclaim this spiritual and cultural center, including the cemetery where their family members were buried. They formed the Wassama Association to raise the \$69,950 to purchase the property. When it became apparent that the fundraising effort would not succeed, they turned to State Parks.

Recognizing the historical and cultural value of Wassama, State Parks purchased the property in 1978. Because the State could only afford to

save the Round House property by purchasing it but did not have the funds to operate the park, the Wassama Association signed a 25 year contract with DPR to operate the park in July 1978.

This contract has now expired, but Calaveras Sector and Central Valley District staff, the Wassama Association, and the Cultural Resources Division are working together to find



the best way to operate the park and increase awareness of this little known jewel of the Calaveras Sector.

In addition to the Round House, Wassama Round House SHP also contains a cemetery, bedrock mortars, and the archaeological remains of a village that was first occupied prior to the Gold Rush. There is also a

reconstructed sweat lodge in the park that is actively used by the local community in the traditional way.

One of the best descriptions of the park is from the Wassama Association's brochure that welcomes visitors to this special place: *"Among these oak trees and acorn woodpeckers, close to running streams, the Miwuk lived for many generations. We were born and died here. This was our home."*

"For our ceremonies, we built a large Roundhouse, where we danced and sang to celebrate the food harvest, to reach the spirits, and to mourn the dead. When a leader died, we burned the old Roundhouse and built a new one in

its place. The Roundhouse we have now stands where others stood before it. We still hold ceremonies here.

"You are welcome at Wassama. It is a living place, so please respect our Roundhouse, our Cemetery, and our ways. Tread lightly where our people have walked for so long."

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twist my arm.

1450 hrs: ROC paperwork needs to be signed and checked.

1455 hrs: The lead park aide is in Lake Tahoe and wants me to call Grover Hot Springs for her. She won't be able to make it for her reservation tonight.

1500 hrs: The night shift is on.

1515 hrs: Let's wrap this up. Augustus T. Dowd shows up and the routine of these trees is suddenly gone.

No more fires in the grove, but lots of saws and people and horses and a highway and a hotel and then cars and more people and then hotels on

wheels. These last hundred and fifty years have been a whirlwind of change and activity.

1530 hrs: Where did yesterday's deposit go? Oh, there it is, in the safe...

1545 hrs: The big trees of Calaveras Big Trees State Park endure all this activity the way they endure encroaching White Firs. You can exist in my shade, use the water and minerals that I leave to you, live your short little lives and die, returning to the soil to feed me.

There is another aspect of Calaveras Big Trees State Park which the Giant Sequoias can't appreciate. It's the

history which the park staff and the park visitors work together to create every day. The "D"s are in this week. They've been here every August for thirty five years. The matriarch asked me if there are others that I know of who have been coming to Big Trees for that long. I told her that I often hear, "I've been coming here for XX years" but it is often said in defense of some act or omission of theirs or to illustrate the point that they don't like the rules. I generally don't take note of how many years they say they've been coming here because once they

See CALAVERAS, page 11

ROLLING STONES

by **Peggy Ronning**, Curator I

For some objects, being donated to a museum is like being put out to pasture after an active life in service. This is not true for the specimens in the California State Mining and Mineral Museum collection. Once, plate tectonics and erosion dictated the travel of these rocks and minerals, at speeds measured in geologic time. Now, exhibits from our jet set collection travel from Mariposa to four or more gem and mineral shows a year in California and the western U.S.

Yes, it does involve paperwork, but it is possible for your museum objects to leave their parks for a short period of time to increase public awareness and also reach people who can't visit your park in person. If the venue is secure, the environmental conditions won't damage the objects, and the objects are sturdy enough to survive the trip, by all means dig out that DPR-929 Release of Objects form and start sharing. Just don't forget to fill out a DPR-927 Receipt of Objects when the objects come home again! (See DOM 2010.6)

Every year, I join mineral curators from around the world and bring exhibits to the huge international gem and mineral shows in Tucson, AZ, and Denver, CO. Yes, that paperwork I was talking about includes out of state travel requests. Museums that exhibit at these shows include the Smithsonian, the American Museum of Natural History, and even the University of Wollongong in Australia. In addition to sharing our collections with mineral aficionados, these shows also give mineral curators a chance to share information and network. It is not uncommon to meet

mineral curators from museums in Moscow, Scotland, France, and Australia at these shows.

I also take exhibits to gem and mineral shows in California. Our exhibits won awards at the Mineral Society of Southern California show twice. Other audiences we have reached include visitors to the Turlock, San Francisco, and State Mineral Shows. The State Show moves around. In 2003 it was in Ventura, and this year it was in Roseville.

In 2004 we had the honor of hosting the State Mineral Show at the museum. This was a lot of hard work, but it really developed a team relationship between the museum, our cooperating association, and the Mariposa Gem and Mineral Society with whom we co-sponsored the show. This show also helped raise

awareness of the museum among all the member clubs of the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies.

But if you ask Central Valley District Sector Superintendents **Dave Gould** and **Dennis Imhoff**, their highlight was escorting the museum's prize specimen, the priceless Fricot Nugget, to the 50th Anniversary Tucson Gem and Mineral Show in February 2004. (For the record, I was the only curator at the show with my own armed guards!) For their golden anniversary show, the Tucson Gem and Mineral Society asked museums and private collectors to display their best and most famous gold specimens, and they were not disappointed. DPR's fabulous 13-pound crystalline gold specimen was seen by approximately 29,000 visitors over the course of the four-day show.

As you can see, the effort involved in taking exhibits to gem and mineral shows is more than offset by the exposure, awareness, and goodwill created for our museum and State Parks. An added benefit is that we develop 2-3 new exhibits every year that we display in the museum after the shows are over. This ensures that our museum exhibits change regularly and gives people a reason for making repeat visits.



^^Dennis Imhoff, Peggy Ronning, and Dave Gould with the Fricot Nugget at the mineral show in Tucson

Peggy sets up for the Denver show >>



25 YEARS OF DIGGIN'

by **Kim Baker**

Supervising Ranger, Columbia SHP

June 2, 3, 4 and 5, 2005, marked the 25th year of a unique gold-rush living history program at Columbia State Historic Park. The purpose of the event is to show what the early tent town of Columbia looked like.

Like most towns that grew out of the gold rush, Columbia was originally a shanty town consisting of tents, shanties, crude log structures, erected around the seasonal placer "Diggin's". Within a few years of the gold discovery, a more permanent town was constructed, including a sophisticated flume system to bring year-round water to the town. After suffering devastating fires in 1854 & 1857, the merchants began to rebuild out of brick, and today over 30 original brick buildings are the significant historic resources that define the park. This is exactly the type of event that California State Parks would probably never be able to pull-off without the major driving force of a crew of single-minded volunteers and docents. Fortunately, Columbia has

this element.

The contributions of time, and personal expense, which are donated by over 100 participants each year is what makes this event happen.

In the past three years, the event has included more docents from other park units. Docents from Old Town San Diego,



<<State Park Interpreter **Michelle Hofmann** with "miners."

bring a copy of their current VSA from their permanent park, which serves as a recommendation. Our docents return the favor for Gold Rush Days in

Old Sac, 49er Family Fest at Marshall Gold, and other events around the state. Columbia Diggins Tent Town 1852 hosts over 4,000 visitors each year, including 680 4th graders this year alone. Now that I've participated in the event for the past two years, I'm sold on the magic. The details researched and recreated by over 100 volunteers and docents, who come from all over the state to eat, drink, breathe and live 1852, is mesmerizing. I truly believe it is the best event of its kind in State Parks, and I think we should all be proud of its success.

docents and staff from Old Town Sacramento, docents and staff from Sutter's Fort, docents and staff from Ft. Tejon, and docents from Marshall Gold SHP, all contribute to the success of the event. We offer on-site camping, and 3 squares a day for our visitors. To streamline docent coordination, we ask them to



SEEING THE FOREST...

by **Wayne Harrison**
Senior Resource Ecologist

All too often the management of natural resources at many of our state park units consists of fighting a series of battles to ward off impending and serious threats. Proposals to bisect units with a freeway or high-speed rail system, invasions by aggressive weeds, urban sprawl turning our parks into ecological islands, and visitors literally loving our parks to death are examples of the type of problems with which state park ecologists deal. So much time and effort is put into protecting the natural values we already have in our parks possess that there is little left to actually trying to improve them.

But then there are units such as Calaveras Big Trees State Park, one of the park systems "crown jewels," and a wonderful example of the mixed-coniferous forest of the Sierra Nevada. Sure, a state highway goes through the park, but it's a quiet, two lane road. Our major invasive weed (bull thistle) is under control, and more a pain to the thumbs than a pain in the neck, and our urban sprawl is limited to just about ten percent of our total boundary. As for our visitors, although they do love the park, their affection is limited to a few hundred acres out of 6500, and then only for four or five months out of the year. All in all, resource management at Big Trees is downright fun.

Even here, though, all is not perfect. For over 100 years the landscape has been saddled with an artificial fire regime that doesn't really like mixed-coniferous forests. After thousands of years of frequent and generally low intensity fires, the trees (as well as the animals and other plants) must now deal with rare – but very intense –

devastating fires.

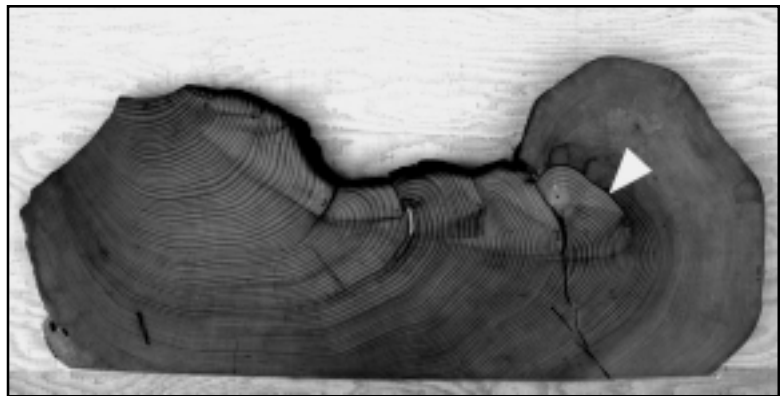
One result of this long period without fire is a striking increase in the number of trees on the forest floor. Stand densities that might have been around 60 to 80 stems per acre under the historic fire regime had erupted with hundreds of trees. Most land managers used to think this was a good thing, and a sign of a healthy, productive forest: conveniently overlooking the fact that all of these trees were competing for essential resources that thoughtlessly hadn't increased one bit. There was no net increase in available sunlight, soils didn't become richer, and rainfall varied from year to year about as much as it ever did.

We can see the result of this competition by analyzing the rings of old growth conifers. When we look at rings from the 16th, 17th, 18th, and much of the 19th century, we see a seemingly random arrangement of wide rings, not so wide rings, and sometimes very narrow rings. Put

dates on those rings and look at enough samples though, and a pattern emerges. This pattern is created by one (and only one) environmental variable for the mixed-coniferous forest of the Sierra Nevada: rainfall. When rain is abundant the trees grow well and the ring for that year is wide. If a drought occurs the following year the next ring will be narrow, and the worse the draught the more narrow the ring. Looking at the more recent rings from the same trees can tell a different story. Often we find that the rings put on during the later part of the 19th Century and all of the 20th are uniformly narrow, sometimes microscopic. It is as if the earth had entered a decades-long dry spell, which is not the case. Yet as far as these trees are concerned, it is true. Virtually the entire mixed-conifer ecosystem is in the midst of a century long draught, and a toll is being paid in greater fire danger and increased susceptibility to insects and disease.

Thirty years ago we all hoped that

See FOREST, page 11



This slab of incense cedar was cut from a snag in the South Grove, Calaveras Big Trees SP. The oldest ring dates to 1756, and is located along the upper left hand corner of the slab. Eight fire scars are located along the top edge in a span of 108 years, with the last in 1864 (arrow). This represents a fairly typical pattern of fire occurrence under a natural fire regime. (Note the well-defined and wide growth rings during this period.) No fire scars are found from 1864 until the trees death in 1974. During most of this 110-year period the growth rings have become extremely narrow, reflecting an increased stand density and stress-induced growth suppression.

...FOR THE TREES

FOREST, from page 10

an energetic program of prescribed burning would solve the problem by once again thinning the understory, but soon realized that the target trees had grown too large to eliminate with low intensity fires. We simply can't plan burns that are hot enough to thin out the competing understory and be controllable at the same time.

Enter what has been derisively called "chain-saw ecology."

For the past several years we have been thinning understory trees from large parts of the park, in an attempt to bring stand densities back into a semblance of what they would have been if the fire regime had not changed. To be honest, we have no way of knowing what that forest would look like, and so are striving to bring conditions back to within a range of probability; we are happy if we can leave thinking that the stand in which we have been working could have looked this way.



^Burning at Calaveras in the early days of the prescribed burn program

Chain-saw ecology is an evolving tool. We quickly learned that simply cutting down trees is the easy. The problem is dealing with the resulting biomass. Stacking and burning is a

traditional method, and we do quite a bit of that, but even this method is subject to improvement. We now often stack the fuels in long, short rows, emulating the type of combustion pattern and intensity that would have resulted when downed logs were consumed, thus avoiding the pock-mark circles of traditional stacking methods. We are also using these piles as ignition points for prescribed burns, or covering them and returning in the winter when surrounding fuels are too wet to burn. These techniques allow us to burn without constructing soil-disturbing control lines around each pile.

This is slow and labor intensive work, but we have made a commitment to do whatever is necessary to reverse the trend that has put our forests in such jeopardy. We won't really know how effective this until we come back in a few years and check for a rebound in the annual growth of the remaining trees, measuring success 'one ring at a time.'

THE CALL, from page 3

sites have been held and strategies discussed for where to take this process in the future. Columbia, the "Gem of the Southern Mines" plays host to over 10,000 4th grade school students each year and about half a million visitors. A well planned Visitor Center could do a lot to more effectively interpret the California gold rush in Columbia SHP. It would add a much needed dimension to our educational effort.

It is a great opportunity to be involved in these three Visitor Center building projects. It is however amazing to me the time it takes and the layers of bureaucracy to deal with in order to turn these types of projects into reality. But it is also very rewarding, as you have experienced or can imagine. I remember back to the mid-1980's when our small staff at Mt. Tamalpais SP

gutted the old concrete restroom near the summit and turned it into a very small Visitor Center. It truly was a labor of love! We were all so proud and had visions of re-constructing the historic tavern/train station and making it the Visitor Center some day. (Twenty years later I understand the old concrete restroom is still home to the Mt. Tam Visitor Center!)

Visions of park projects, especially new Visitor Centers, are exciting to me and it is very rewarding to be in a position to make a contribution and help move this process along, hopefully to a reality someday. And as the Superintendent of the Calaveras Sector it is only one small part of the incredible variety of things that need to get done on a daily basis. And as Robert Louis Stevenson said, it must be a labour of love. I must have heard the call!

CALAVERAS, from page 7

calm down it isn't the same number anyway. I told Mrs. "D" that the "D" family is among the longest running campers that I have run across and could she please move the third car to overflow parking instead of parking on those tree roots.

I see Junior Rangers at my programs that have every pin, patch, sticker, and stamp that has been offered in the last 5 years. Those kids will be bringing *their* kids to Calaveras Big Trees SP long after I retire. My replacement's replacement will hear how we did Junior Rangers back in '05. And rangers on patrol will be looking for people tying their hovercrafts to the Abraham Lincoln Tree.

ALIVE, WELL, AND MOVING FORWARD - THE STATE PARKS ARMORERS PROGRAM

by **Ken Wilbur**

Chief Armorer, California State Parks

. Armorers are the team of weapons experts that help maintain the department's weapons within factory specifications, inspecting and repairing weapons, and also teaching other peace officers, usually Firearms Instructors, how to inspect the weapons as well.

The Department uses three different weapons, the Smith & Wesson semi-auto pistol, the Remington 870 shotgun, and more recently the Colt AR-15 rifle. It was found early on that these pieces of machinery needed regular maintenance and repair in order to function properly. Each Departmental Armorer has received specialized training on these weapons. Knowing that the department could not afford to create specific staff positions to handle the annual inspection, repair, and maintenance of approximately 700 semi-auto pistols, 500 shotguns and 200 rifles, a group of dedicated State Park Peace Officers agreed to become Departmental Armorers in addition to their regular state park jobs. It started with only one person on a trial basis in the early 1980's, but has progressed up to thirteen Armorers.

However, over half of them are now working as retired annuitants. There are also nearly sixty active Firearms Inspectors throughout the state that have been trained to complete annual inspections.

In the beginning, with little or no funding, the Armorers program struggled. Armorers purchased their own tools, did inspections and repairs on their own time, and acquired parts as best they could using meager district funds. However, things are

brighter these days with the formal support and training opportunities at Mott Training Center. The very capable staff there has supported nine Firearms Inspectors classes. A Firearms Inspector newsletter is developed annually to ensure the latest information about our weapons is available to all Inspectors.

Over the years, much effort has been made to develop one of the best Firearms Inspector's courses available. As new Armorers are trained and older Armorers re-certified, the Department's Firearms Inspector's Handbook continues to improve. Firearm inspection sheets were developed and are updated as the various companies present new methods of inspections, make changes in parts, or as problems arise and are solved. A solid relationship with company representatives as well as the California Highway Patrol gunsmiths, who deal with the same weapons as we do, has helped us

maintain departmental weapons to the highest standards. Through the support of the Mott Training Center and the Office of Field Services, we are able to continue to provide the most professional and up to date Armorer and Firearms Inspector services for our front line State Park Peace Officers. I, along with the rest of the Armorers, wish to say, "Thank you for your support. We appreciate what you have done for keeping the Armorers Program alive and well".

Lastly, I would like to identify and thank the Armorers for their individual professionalism and dedication to the Armorers Program. They are, in alphabetical order, **Tracey Becker, Darrell Bennett, Dan Falat, Chuck Grennell, Gary Howard, Lou Marquette, Steve Michel, Bill Miller, Sherman Poole, Laura Van Etten-Collins and Pete Yarbrough.**

13th ANNUAL RETIREES' RENDEZVOUS, Oct. 1, 2

The annual "Retirees' Rendezvous" will be at TURLOCK LAKE SRA this year, a new location, on the first Saturday and Sunday in October:

The Lake is a short distance from the campground and is just FULL of BIG trout and bass. A launching ramp is available. Water skiing is also allowed. The Tuolumne River runs adjacent to the campground and can be fished with barbless hooks, artificial bait and as "catch and release."

The campground has rest rooms, showers and water available. No RV dump is available; a list of those nearby will be provided. Tables are limited, so if you have a portable one, please bring it along.

Some minor program changes: the Pancake Breakfast will now be a Continental Breakfast, with pastries,

fruit, juice and coffee. For the Saturday night dinner; the committee will provide the tri-tip/chicken, beans and dessert. They ask participants to bring salads, veggie plates, or French bread.

The Friday Night, "Road-Kill Grille", the raffle of donated items, the Pitch and Putt Golf Tournament and the camaraderie of old and new friends will remain the same.

The CSPRA Board of Directors has voted to place any income, over and above the costs of the "Rendezvous", into the CSPRA Jim Whitehead Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Registration forms are due by 9/16/05 and are available at the CSPRA.com webpage via the Retirees link. Questions? Contact **Kirk Wallace**, (209) 586-3209.

UPDATE FROM SACRAMENTO

by **Monica Miller**, CSPRA lobbyist

When the 2005-06 Legislative Session opened in January the question that remained unanswered was whether the Governor would or would not actually call a special election this November. That question was answered on June 13 when the Governor called a special election for this November 8th. The question and possibility of an election has dominated the agenda in Sacramento for much of the year and impacted nearly every issue as the two sides have jockeyed for position with the voters.

The stage was set back on January 5 when Governor Schwarzenegger used his State of the State address to both Houses of the Legislature to unveil a broad program to reform state government. He outlined five major proposals including: merit pay for teachers, a budget cap that restricts state spending increases, state pension reform, taking redistricting away from the legislature and giving it to a commission of retired judges and abolishing unneeded State Boards and Commissions.

The Governor made it clear in calling a special session of the Legislature that if the Legislature failed to act on his proposals he would gather signatures for ballot initiatives to enact his reform agenda and call a special election.

The Democrats in the Legislature and their political allies such as public employee unions including the teachers, firefighters and police, felt that the Governor's agenda was to dramatically shift the balance of political power in California at their expense. It does not appear that any serious negotiations ever took place. The affected unions spent millions of dollars in political ads on television and radio hammering the

Governor and his proposals.

That campaign by police, firefighters, teachers and nurses proved to be remarkably effective and the Governor's poll numbers have dropped dramatically. Under fire from widows and orphans of police and firefighters, he abandoned his pension reform proposal. He dropped his proposal to abolish boards and commissions. He modified his teacher merit pay proposal to a teacher tenure focus. But he has forged ahead, driving his Humvee to shopping malls to gather signatures while raising millions of dollars himself from the business community.

The Governor and the State Chamber of Commerce and other allies have qualified ballot initiatives to (1) create a new spending cap that gives the Governor more power to cut state spending (2) take the away the power of the Legislature to draw legislative and congressional districts (3) extend from 2 to 5 years the time required for teachers to achieve tenure protections (4) limit the ability of public employees unions to use their dues for


political contributions.

There is no doubt that the stakes are high. Failure for the Governor could affect his re-election or even his decision to run. Victory would reduce the power of the unions in this state and perhaps break the Democrats hold on the State Legislature. Just in the last few months both the teachers union and the correctional officers have raised their dues to increase their political contribution budgets for the battle this fall. The teachers union is looking to spend \$50 million dollars. The Governor will be looking to the business community to raise funds for his initiative. Seldom in California political history have the voters had such a clear choice between two very different competing visions for our state.



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PRESIDENT from page 2

that only insane human beings (or inveterate counters of wildlife...if there's a difference between the two) would venture into on purpose. With their populations hovering tentatively around 700 individuals, they are an indicator species of the health of their environment. They are what counts.

The Department of Parks and Recreation, the Smith River Alliance, and the Save the Redwoods League (to name some of the major players) have recognized the Smith River as an extremely significant watershed in a state where every run-of-the-mill watershed is significant. The salmonids, or even the suckers or lamprey, that inhabit that river are great indicators of the health of the entire watershed. If the gravel beds used for spawning are silted up, if pollutants and toxins are spilled upstream, or if any one of thousands of influences are out of balance, it affects the whole river. Algae in balance with nymphal aquatic insects, in balance with salmon and steelhead smolt, in balance with resident and sea-run cutthroat trout indicate a healthy, though harsh, environment. The number of adult fish in the river tell us what's going on there. They are what count.

I used to count visitors. I used to debate the appropriate "carrying capacity" – how big the count of people should get to be - for sensitive park units. I used to count revenue and seasonal salaries, OE funds, person years, overtime hours and crime stats. All of those bottom line numbers aren't the bottom line. They represent the numerical machinations we go through to be sure we get the job done, the visitors served, the facilities cleaned and in repair, the resources protected, and the story delivered to the visitors about the value of park lands. They are the numbers between the State's annual budget and the actual reality of a healthy park. Life is simpler for me now. I've cut out the "middle man" numbers. Now I get to count what really counts.

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Auburn A Dam of a Park?

by **Ron Brean**, CSPRA President

Friends and colleagues, the issue of the Auburn Dam is one that doesn't seem to ever go away. Continued activity by a very small, very local contingent in Congress keeps the issue alive in spite of its many fiscal, environmental, safety, and recreational problems and in spite of continued opposition and defeat. Rising costs to make needed flood control improvement to Folsom Dam and a poll conducted by die-hard dam proponents have raised the issue yet again.

If you've visited Auburn State Recreation Area, worked there, or if you've read Ranger **Jordon Fisher Smith's** book, *Nature Noir*, you know what a park treasure the American River Canyon is and can continue to be. You can help protect this wonderful resource in a couple of ways:

1. Let us know at CSPRA what you think about starting a "campaign" (for lack of a better way of describing it) to secure the protection of the American River Canyon as a park in perpetuity, free from threat of inundation. You can contact me directly at ron@cspira.com or share your ideas publicly through the various e-mail list-serves that exist for that purpose (the Reflector or the Backbone).

2. Check out the web site of Friends of the River at www.friendsoftheriver.org to learn more about the issues facing the park and the river in Auburn.

3. Let your Congress person, regardless of the congressional district in which you may live, know what you think of the idea and the time and energy that's been wasted on it while other issues (like making the American River Canyon at Auburn an official park and funding it appropriately) are left unaddressed.

PROMOTING PROFESSIONALISM IN CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS Membership

To join CSPRA, mail this application to: P.O. Box 2132
Newport, OR 97365
For all except "Active" member payroll deduction, please include check for 1 year's dues.

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Social Security #

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Phone: Home

District, Section, or Park:

Membership type (Circle one):

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Supporting \$36/year

Organization \$50/year

Benefactor \$1,000/life

I hereby authorize the State Controller to deduct from my salary and transmit as designated an amount for membership dues in the California State Park Rangers Association. This authorization will remain in effect until cancelled by myself or by the organization. I certify I am a member of the above organization and understand that termination of my membership will cancel all deductions made under this organization.

Signature

Date

humor in unicorn



Mixed Metaphors and Malaprops

by Jeff Price, retired

Very, very wide coverage.
Now the Channel 4 "snowcast" with a live report from Frazier Park where our reporter is standing at the 6,000 square foot level. . .

It's déjà vu all over again.
If history repeats itself, I should think we can expect the same thing again.

Genetic obfuscation.
I owe a lot of my success to my parents, especially my mother and father.

Twisted statistics.
Sure there have been injuries and even some deaths in boxing, but none of them really that serious.

Space in outer space.
The flood victims are cut off outside of the world.

Just iron out the problem!
It's your job, but I think you have way too many pots in the fire.

GET CONNECTED

CSPRA Online: Catch up on CSPRA activities, contact your District Reps, Board or Officers, get latest information www.cspra.com

EXECUTIVE MANAGER



by Laura Svensgaard
CSPRA Executive Manager

It's been a wonderful and very busy couple of months. Membership renewals have gone out to most of our retirees. And while certainly the quick and very positive response has been encouraging, the notes letting me know what you've been up to have been an added treat. **Casey Buchter** and his partner, **Diane Landry**, are pursuing their passion for hiking the world by spending a year in Scotland. **Denzil and Jennie Verardo** are filing their time with travel, teaching and consulting. **Bruce and Peggy Kennedy** spent time in Chicago and Manitoba; viewing nearly 250 bird species traveling the pacific flyway on the edge of the Artic on Hudson's Bay. And our dear **Gar (Salzgeber)** seems to be making up for lost time with bicycle treks in Borrego and, more recently, along

the coast route from Seattle to Carpinteria.

Also, please know, if you need and did not get a letter verifying your CSPRA dues payments for fiscal year 2004-05, simply email or call me and I'll get one to you post haste.

And finally, a very special thanks to **Carl Chavez** for his recent contribution to the Scholarship Fund.

Want a CSPRA scholarship?

Contact **Fred Jee** at
(760) 767-4651
jeeology@yahoo.com

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CALIFORNIA STATE PARK RANGERS ASSOCIATION

Mission Statement



The California State Park Rangers Association is an organization of park professionals dedicated to advancement of the highest principles of public service, and established to support, protect, and defend the integrity of State Parks for present and future generations.



Founded 1964