



New Insect **(the Gold-spotted Oak Borer)** **Threatens Oaks in San Diego County**

Oak tree mortality on the Cleveland National Forest' Descanso Ranger District has occurred since 2002. Over these past six years, an estimated 15,790 oaks have died across 16,118 acres of forested land. Coast live oak and California black oak are the primary species affected.

In a recent study conducted by Forest Service Entomologist Tom Coleman, he discovered that *Agrilus coxalis* was the primary insect found attacking oak trees. *A. coxalis* is a flat-headed wood-borer and is referred as the "Gold-spotted Oak Borer."

US Forest Service, Cleveland National Forest

San Diego, CA August 16, 2008 —For the past seven years, Oak decline has been evident in eastern San Diego County near the communities of Descanso and Pine Valley. Current oak tree mortality levels are reaching 10% and higher in woodlands on and near the Descanso Ranger District of the Cleveland National Forest.

Over the past few months, Forest Service entomologist Tom Coleman discovered that damage was due to the feeding activity of a new insect to California. The insect does not yet have an official name, but is tentatively being called the "Gold-spotted Oak borer," *Agrilus coxalis*. This beetle is among a group of boring insects called metallic woodborers, flatheaded borers, or jewel beetles.

Coleman conducted field studies to see why the oak trees had been dying, led to the discovery that the gold-spotted oak borer may have been inadvertently introduced to the region or has expanded its range from other parts of the U.S. or as far southeast as Guatemala. The beetle is the reason why deaths in Coast live oak and California black oak from the community of Alpine; east to Mt Laguna; and north to Julian have been happening in such large numbers. Prior to the discovery of the beetle, drought was thought to be the cause of oak deaths. As many as 70% of the oak trees in these areas are infested.

"With the work that Tom did, we are now able to create specific projects aimed at eliminating the beetles and saving our oak trees," said Will Metz, Forest Supervisor for the Cleveland National Forest. These oak trees do not re-sprout, resulting in degraded wildlife habitat and potentially tree stand type conversion away from oak trees and more towards shrub or brush vegetation types. The dead oak trees also contribute to hazardous fuel accumulations.

Evidence of insect attacks on oak trees can be seen by the presence of the insect under the bark, D-shaped exit holes in the bark, woodpecker foraging, and bark staining on the trunk of the tree and larger branches.

Confirmation of the gold-spotted oak borer's work has been found in the areas of Pine Valley, Guatay, Descanso, Laguna Mountain and Cuyamaca State Park. "It is not only Forest Service lands that have been impacted by the loss of the oak trees it's the entire community," said Will Metz, "based on Coleman's work, the public and our partner agencies can now focus our efforts towards saving our oak trees across San Diego County".

For more information about the gold-spotted oak borer, a public meeting will be hosted by the Forest Service in October (time and location to be determined). If you are interested in attending, please check the Cleveland National Forest website in September for details, or call the Descanso Ranger District at 619-445-6235. Until then, there are things you can do to reduce or prevent gold-spotted oak borer attacks. These guidelines have been adopted from similar wood boring species, but have not been tested specifically on the gold-spotted oak borer. Applying these methods does not guarantee tree survival.



From the President's Patrol Truck

This past year 2008 the PRAC Board had its hands full. I wanted to recap our efforts and accomplishments for the membership. The board has made a lot of progress in the past year and is now ready to move forward for the year 2009.

The PRAC board was faced with issues in the beginning of 2008. What is it that draws the members to become a PRAC Member? This was the big question I asked our board. Why do people spend their money to join our association? Lee said it was for the hat....we all didn't believe that. I believe it was to become a part of something. I believe that it is a group of folks who share the common goals and interests. People who put service above self. So I asked the board what we can do for the membership. How can we give back to them? Well we all brainstormed together and came up with some ideas.

Our short term goals were our priority in 2008. Our main goal was to make sure that PRAC was operating correctly and efficiently. With our current economy we are looking into alternative ways to continue to serve our membership for less. With our new office manager Betsy Anderson, having a background in accounting and tax preparation, we hope to dial all of our records in and tighten up on efficiency. Conference calls have been a major money saver for our board meetings. David Sterling and Betsy have made some great efforts to create a budget, update our banking and look into possibilities for the future. Betsy and Marie Fong have been working together to have an outside vendor conduct an audit of our financial records. Additionally they have both undertaken the duty of updating the Ranger Directory. The board has also inquired into officers insurance for all board members. All of this, and we were still there for the LA City Park Rangers, and The Oakland Rangers when they called on us. Scheduling trainings in our regions, helping rangers with there mock interviews, resumes, and career advice that is what we are here for.

What is in store for us in 2009? Our long term goals are beginning to unveil. We have sent 2 board members to attend Grant classes. There are many grants out there for all sorts of trainings. If we can successfully obtain grant funding to fund trainings in our regions, we maybe able to provide quality trainings to our membership for little or no charge. We are also looking into changing our tax information to a 501C3. This would allow us to further take advantage of government grants for public safety and public outreach grants. We are working with CSPRA to explore our options with the Parks Conference becoming its own entity.

A lot of emails have been passed around through our membership regarding the Board's actions. I wanted to take the time to include everyone on the steps this board has taken to insure the growth of our association and the promotion of professionalism through unity. If anyone has any ideas or would like to assist the board, all board meetings are open to all membership and I/we encourage all members to step up and get involved.

Dave Updike

California Natives by Ranger Sara Girard

Watch for a new section in the *Signpost* spotlighting California Natives. Let's start this series with one of my favorites:

Coast horned lizard

The coast (San Diego) horned lizard [*Phrynosoma coronatum* (blainvillii population)] is designated by the California Department of Fish and Game as a species of special concern that has disappeared from approximately 45 percent

of its historical range. It lives in a variety of habitats including scrub, chaparral, and grassland. The diet of this lizard is almost exclusively limited to native harvester ants and it does not eat introduced Argentine ants, which have replaced native ants in many parts of Southern California. This shy lizard uses its camouflaged appearance to blend into its environment when threatened. It also has the ability to squirt blood from the corner of its eyes in an attempt to repel predators.

Washoe County Park Rangers Hold Book Drive for Sun Valley Elementary

by Marie D. Fong

Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space Rangers are collecting new or gently used books for Sun Valley Elementary School. Washoe County Park Rangers will be participating in the school's Reading Week in April and would like to bring a donation of books for the library and for students.

From February 21 through March 15, books may be brought to the Park Offices of Lazy 5, North Valleys, Rancho San Rafael, Bartley Ranch, Galena Creek and Bowers Mansion Regional Parks or may be mailed to Bartley Ranch Regional Park, c/o Park Ranger Marie D. Fong 6000 Bartley Ranch Road, Reno, Nevada 89511.

Washoe County Park Ranger John Keesee said that County Park Rangers are hoping to hold annual book drives for different local schools. "Reading is one of the most important tools for expanding a child's appreciation of our world and their future in it," Keesee said. "We wanted to help provide books for as many children as possible."

Sun Valley Elementary School is a natural place to start donating books to students and teachers. As an At-Risk School with approximately 621 students enrolled last year, the school had a 34.9% transient rate, 442 students qualified for the Free/Reduced Lunch Program, and 271 students have Limited English Proficiency.

The mission of Washoe County's Department of Regional Parks and Open Space is to provide exceptional parks and open space, and recreational opportunities while preserving our natural, historical and cultural resources. Washoe County's Park Rangers feel that the success of these students along with cultivating an interest in their environment, will contribute to happy and health park users in the future. If you would like to participate please contact Park Ranger John Keesee at 775.849.2511, jkeesee@washoecounty.us.

Two Book Reviews

by Bill Grant

(Reprinted from the U.C. Santa Cruz Arboretum Newsletter)

Introduction to Fire in California, by David Carle
U.C. Press 2008, 216 pp. 91 color photos, maps, drawings
Cloth or paper, \$50/\$18.95

Living With Fire, by Sara Jensen and Guy McPherson
U.C. Press 2008 192 pp. photos, line illustrations
Cloth \$29.95

U.C. Press has published six books related to fires in California in the past few years. David Carle was a speaker here at the Arboretum (U.C.S.C.) last year on the subject of air in California. In this book he explains the effect of climate change on fires in natural landscapes, what to do before, during, and after fires as well as a look at the history of fires in the state.

Though these books were produced before the recent outbreak of fires throughout the State, they are as up to date as anything written since.

Carle writes clearly and convincingly about the complex subject, especially stories of his experience as a park ranger for 27 years. There is not a question I could think of that has not been answered well.

The two authors of *Living With Fire* approach the topic from a different point of view: they outline the misconceptions about fires, the basic reasons for our failed fire policies, and the program necessary to overhaul the policy and management if we are to avoid any future catastrophes.

Their suggestions for officials as well as anyone who lives near a potential fire area on understanding how to cope with fires, how we created many of our problems, and how we must plan for a future which will always be faced with sudden appearance of flames.

Nature Quote

"Only when the last tree has died and the last river been poisoned and the last fish been caught will we realize we cannot eat money."

Cree Indian Proverb

Suicide in Parks

Submitted by Loring Larsen

No one likes to deal with it. No one wants their area of responsibility to be known for it. However, suicide can be part of our life as park professionals. The year 2008 ended with the highest number of suicides recorded in our national parks (see following article: Suicides in National Parks Increased in 2008). Statistics vary from state to state in public and private parks and are hard to find. It's not something a department or park wants to be known for. Articles I've read regarding suicide in various parks tell that some are spontaneous but most are planned.

How should we, as park professionals, deal with the issue when we are thrown into it? Agencies will have different approaches just as in all emergency situations. But, how will you act personally? Do you have your own plan? I would suggest that you each take a few minutes of introspection to help answer that question. Suicide may be by someone we've never met before or it could be a regular visitor. In my 20-plus years of working public and private parks, I've had to deal with four suicides. There was no common thread among them except they were in parks. All of them affected me in a different way. One was a regular park visitor and it took longer to work through. We will all look at things differently and react differently. How will you handle it once you get out of your uniform?

Hopefully, you can go through your entire park profession years and never have to deal with a suicide, but the odds are you probably will. Be ready just in case.

Suicides in National Parks Increased in 2008

33 people ended own lives in such places last year, up from 18 in 2006

Associated Press updated 6:42 a.m. PT, Fri., Jan. 2, 2009

SALT LAKE CITY - Freshly unemployed, former business executive Bruce J. Colburn flew to the far northwest corner of Montana in search of a place to die.

In early October, he paid a hotel clerk to drive him into Glacier National Park. He spent the night in a campground and then made his way on foot to a valley between two deep glacial lakes. On a forested slope not far from the trail, he shot himself in the chest with a handgun, according to park officials.

Although his motivation remains unclear, investigators found evidence on a computer that the 53-year-old Reading, Pa., resident had searched for information about suicide in Glacier park, according to Patrick Suddath, branch chief of ranger operations at Glacier.

"He clearly intended to come here for that purpose," said Suddath, who led an extensive search after the man was reported missing.

Count creeping up

Colburn was one of at least 33 people who chose to end their lives last year in a national park. The number is higher than recent years, although the National Park Service hasn't consistently tracked suicides.

"It's some place where, toward the end of someone's life, when they're feeling a total sense of despondency, they want to return to a place of natural beauty ... for their final moments," Suddath said.

Park officials estimate people made more than 274 million visits to the country's 391 national park units last year. The vast majority are intent on seeing breathtaking vistas, wildlife in its natural habitat or places where history was made, such as the Gettysburg battlefield. A troubled few came to end their lives. Among them:

A 46-year-old carpenter with cancer climbed into a canoe and vanished in Everglades National Park.

A 49-year-old builder blamed the economy in a note he left for his ex-wife and attorney before killing himself at the edge of the woods at Georgia's Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park.

A 65-year-old university biology professor disappeared into Utah's Canyonlands National Park, telling relatives in a note he was returning "body and soul to nature."

A 70-year-old woman left a suicide note in the trunk of her car at Arizona's Saguaro National Park before killing herself about a half-mile from a trailhead.

Three people, in separate cases, jumped off a towering bridge at West Virginia's New River Gorge National River.

In 2007, there were 26 suicides or probable suicides in the parks. Park Service search-and-rescue records — which are likely incomplete — show 18 suicides in 2006, 18 in 2005 and 16 in 2004.

More suicides occur in Grand Canyon than any other park in recent years. The park averages two a year. There were three in 2008.

Suicides have been on the rise in some places like Colorado National Monument, where 26 people attempted suicide last year. Two were successful, including a 21-year-old man who hanged himself from a juniper tree near Cold Shivers Point in July.

The numbers there are partly a reflection of nearby Mesa County, where the suicide rate is roughly twice the national average, said Joan Anzelmo, the monument's superintendent. But it's also a testament to people's connections with national parks, places they go to hike, escape urban life and even get married.

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(Story continues on page 5.)

Check Out the PRAC Gallery!

by Park Ranger Marie D. Fong

Visit the new PRAC Gallery at <http://gallery.calranger.org/> to see the best and worst, inspiring and incriminating, hilarious and wholesome, new and old, member submitted photos.

Now is your chance to submit your photos to the collection: from helpful how-not-to's to endearing environmental education moments, your photos will serve to represent the gamete of responsibilities and rewards our jobs offer.

Please send your photos to region6@calranger.org or for larger quantities please mail the images on a c.d. to Marie D. Fong at 5365 Mayberry Drive Reno, Nevada 89519.

And just to get you inspired here is photo from Park Ranger Jerry Buzzard taken near the entrance to Bodie State Historic Park, CA appropriately titled:

"7 Day Stay Limit Strictly Enforced!"



Suicides in National Parks Increased in 2008

(Continued from page 4)

"They come here in the happiest of times and unfortunately some choose to come in the saddest time of their lives," Anzelmo said.

Suicides can take a toll emotionally on rangers and financially for agencies that are part of search-and-recovery operations. After Colburn went missing in Glacier, as many as 40 people from various agencies looked for him. Recovering bodies or cars that go over cliffs can be dangerous as well as expensive.

Most law enforcement rangers in national parks are also trained in emergency medicine, which includes strategies

in dealing with people in crisis. Some park employees are taught to keep an eye out for notes taped to steering wheels and at least one park, Colorado National Monument, has contemplated closing certain areas at night.

Several suicides are prevented by rangers each year, but it would be impossible to stop them all.

"I think anybody that does the kind of work that we do would like to offer hope to anybody that's at that point of despair in their life," said Lane Baker, the Park Service's chief of law enforcement, security and emergency services. "But I'm not sure we can do anything to change that."

Horses Unharnessed

by Marie D. Fong

Often in the field of parks management field staff will begin seeing and recognizing problems long before they become a predictable, documented trend. Sadly this has once again been the case as recognized in the Domestic Horses: Recession Victims article from a December issue of the Reno Gazette Journal. Over the course of the last 6 months, parks within Washoe County, Nevada have seen the abandonment of horses become an increasing problem. In the past it was rare, but not entirely uncommon to recognize a domestic horse that was an escapee or that had been abandoned in an area where a wild herd was commonly present.

Since 1971 these wild herds regardless of their range fall under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), however domesticated horses are not covered by this jurisdiction, nor do they assimilate well with existing herds. Since many parks in Washoe County share boundaries with the BLM as well as other local and federal agencies, wild herds are common to many of these parks especially in the eastern range. These parks, or portions of them, are clearly are enjoyed by wild herds and often host equestrian facilities for park users. Unfortunately, beginning mid-summer these equestrian friendly facilities began to see the abandonment of domestic horses.

The first case that came to my attention began in late May 2008 with reports of an injured horse being harassed and isolated by the established bands of wild (free-roaming) herds. The horse had badly injured a front leg preventing it from readily moving to and from productive watering and feeding sites, making it a vulnerable target for predators and aggressive stallions; however he had chosen to firmly establish himself along a very popular trail in a steep canyon with no vehicular access. Neighbors and sympathetic park visitors took it upon themselves to haul food and water up the canyon to the horse daily for nearly a month. After hundreds of concerned phone calls, e-mails, and conversations with park users and residents, our Ranger staff contacted local animal control and BLM offices in an attempted to relocate the horse to a private residence willing to adopt him, thus preventing further suffering and deterring a situation in which large predators would be drawn down by the injured animal along a major trail system used by hiker, bikers, and equestrians. As various relocation efforts were undertaken both on foot and by mounted riders, failed to secure the horse, a brand was noticed on the horse and through further inspection by a veterinarian (at a distance) it was determined that this horse was indeed a domestic horse abandoned within the park. Finally after 6 weeks, with Ranger staff time taken daily to mitigate the issue with one horse, the creature recovered and moved out of human accessibility within the range.

Within a month we received our second indication that a potential problem was developing. At the same park, an equestrian rider reported that after a wonderful ride, returning to her horse trailer she was surprised by the addition of multiple horse harnessed and tethered within her trailer, no note and not a person in sight. Being an avid, self-proclaimed horse lover and feeling like no other option was available to her on a weekend evening she took the horses home with her.

By late summer our staff was alert to the potential problem of horse abandonment and was quick to monitor random horse trailers that seemed suspect within our district. In late September, one of our seasonal Ranger staff returned

to our headquarter park two hours after the park had officially closed. The park gates were half-gated allowing very limited entrance via a narrow covered bridge, the entrance was signed closed, and all street lights were off. While sweeping the park for any errand vehicles before heading home, the headlights of a truck towing a large, fully loaded horse trailer were seen approaching down the entrance road. Recognizing the likelihood that this trailer full of horses was most likely headed to one of our arenas to be off-loaded under cover of night; our seasonal attempted to intercept the trespassing vehicle. The vehicle failed to stop when the Ranger truck approached with the ambers on, then while our seasonal Ranger attempted to stop the rig and establish communication with the driver, the driver decided to flee by backing his rig up the steep, winding road in the dark to avoid explaining his actions. Finally having pinning the truck and trailer against the curbing, the driver decided it was time to try and explain his actions, stating that he was, "just curious to see what our equestrian facilities were like". Clearly not believing this excuse at 11pm at night our seasonal explained the ramifications of trespassing, failing to stop, and the severity of abandoning livestock within the park, then escorted the vehicle from the property, recording all pertinent information.

A fourth incident was reported November 2009 as I purchased turkey food at the local feed store. An employee inquired if a certain park was in my jurisdiction, and as I got that sinking feeling, she relayed to me that one of their customers had been trail riding at the park on a weekend, returned to the equestrian area as the park closed and had been surprised by an arena with several domestic horses abandoned in its confines. Again this person chose to offer a home to the horses feeling not other option was humanly acceptable. Not only was the feed store aware of the incident, but they were also able to identify the horse's original owners who had recently moved from the state and had abandoned their horses to decrease their moving costs.

In this economic environment, as home foreclosures, loss of income, and other financial pressures loom, many individuals have had to lessen their financial responsibilities. Unfortunately, these responsibilities are often pets and/or livestock. While many people chose shelters and re-homing as responsible options, other do not. Most of us have had the unfortunate experience of finding abandoned pets within our parks and facilities. These creatures: cats, dogs, rabbits, birds, turtles, and others are often easily captured by hand or in traps and transferred in Ranger vehicles or local animal control units to appropriate care facilities. But when large animals such as horses and other livestock begin appearing frequently at your parks and equestrian facilities and there are no self-proclaimed animal lovers with room for 3-5 new horses, what is the solution? If this problem has not yet begun to affect your facilities, now is the ideal time to start brainstorming and researching a few potential options. Many local animal control agencies do not have the means to transport these animals, nor to house them. As those familiar with livestock know, many animals are trailer shy and even if you have the means to transport these animals, they might not be willing to trailer without sedation. Be prepared: take this time to research your options; work with your local animal control agencies, rescue groups, and shelters so you have a few contacts and options if and/or when this becomes an issue for you.

Domestic Horses: Recession Victims

(Reprinted from Reno Gazette Journal)

by Jeff DeLong - December 20, 2008

A purebred Arabian colt was found abandoned, underfed and tied to a telephone pole late last month in Carson City. Its future is uncertain, and its plight is part of a national trend of increasing horse abandonment cited by livestock, agricultural and animal control officials in Nevada and across the country.

The colt abandoned in Carson City “just needs a home,” said Dani Amaru, an officer for city’s animal services department.

That will probably happen after a public auction later this month, but many horses aren’t so lucky. As the economy worsens and the cost of feeding and caring for horses rises, more people are abandoning their animals into the wild, where many starve and die.

No national numbers are available, but there are “definitely thousands of them out there,” said Dave Duquette, an Oregon horse trainer and president of the United Horsemen’s Front.

Abandonment ‘accelerated’

In Northern Nevada this year, 63 abandoned domestic horses have been found. It’s an unprecedented situation, said Ed Foster, spokesman for the Nevada Department of Agriculture.

“It’s accelerated since the beginning of the year, and it’s a national trend,” Foster said. “It’s a real problem.”

Nevada is home to roughly half the estimated 33,000 wild horses that roam the open range across the West. Many domestic horse owners believe their animals, if released into the wild, will be adopted by wild herds. They are sadly mistaken, Foster said.

“The wild horse herd will reject them in the most violent manner,” Foster said. “It ends up being a bad end for that horse.”

“It would be basically like someone dropping you off in the plains of Africa,” agreed Willis Lamm, a Stagecoach horse trainer and member of the Lyon County Animal Control Advisory Board.

“You’re better off shooting the horse than putting it through something like that,” Lamm said.

With the economy worsening, no easy solutions are in sight, experts said.

“It just sort of provided that perfect storm where folks have to decide whether to feed the kids or feed the horses,” said Dr. Kerry Rood, a veterinarian with Utah State University. “I believe it’s becoming a serious problem, and I think it’s only going to get bigger.”

And sale of horses is becoming “less and less” of a viable option under current conditions, said Patricia Evans, an equine specialist at Utah State. Auctioneers screening horses proposed for sale are turning them away if they don’t think they will bring enough money, Evans said.

“We have a lot of horses going to auction that just don’t sell, and a lot of them are really good horses,” agreed Dr. Mike Short of the Florida Department of Agriculture.

Across the country, examples of the scope:

* Jack Noble, field operations manager for the Oregon Department of Agriculture, responded in September to a report of domestic horses abandoned on a rural road in that state’s Willamette Valley. He found 11, all filthy, sickly and starving.

“They were just let loose, and they were severely malnourished,” Noble said. “It’s disturbing to see any animals that have been abused in that way.”

The horses Noble found were sold at auction for \$5 to \$40 each, surprising considering their condition, Nobel said. Otherwise, they likely would have been euthanized, he said.

* In Wyoming, “huge increases” in the number of domestic horses being dumped on public and private land are occurring, said Jim Schwartz, director of the Wyoming Livestock Board. “People are just dumping them out there, and they don’t know how to survive,” he said.

Lee Romsa, Wyoming’s brand commissioner, said he would normally handle six to eight cases per year involving abandoned domestic horses. This year, he said, “we’ve had at least 41.”

* In a situation he described as “absolutely insane,” Idaho State Brand Inspector Larry Hayhurst said he’s dealt with about 50 such cases this year, up from one or two during a normal year. A “significant increase” in the problem is also reported by Steve Merritt, spokesman for the Montana Department of Livestock.

Slaughter an Issue

While a bad economy and a lack of financial capability for people to care for their horses might be a large part of the problem, others also point to a lack of any American slaughterhouses for horses. The country’s last such facility in Illinois was closed in 2007.

“That is definitely a factor,” said Morgan Silver, executive director of the Horse Protection Association of Florida. “There was an outlet before because they could be slaughtered.”

Duquette of the United Horseman’s Front in Oregon described the shutdown of American slaughterhouses as the true “root of the problem.”

But the issue of horse slaughtering remains highly controversial. Bruce Friedrich, spokesman for People for Ethical Treatment of Animals, said closure of American slaughterhouses was a necessary end to a “horribly abusive” practice.

PETA helped lead legislative efforts to close the Illinois slaughterhouse last year and others earlier in Texas, Friedrich said. The group is now pursuing law to prohibit shipping of American horses to slaughterhouses in Mexico and Canada.

“The idea of slaughtering your companion animal is a perverse betrayal,” Friedrich said. “We need a solution, but we need a compassionate solution.”

Silver said the debate over slaughter is a symptom of a larger issue—too many horses across the country.

“It’s actually a cart before the horse sort of thing,” she said. “The cause is overproduction. The cause is rampant overbreeding.”

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