Geology at Whiskeytown Reals Rocks

by Anette Rardin, Visitor Use Assistant

One of my favorite activities at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area is to paddle a kayak to the middle of the lake, stop and view the scenery that encircles me. It reminds me of my grandmother’s sapphire ring. The lake, of course, is the gemstone, surrounded by the mountains that hold it in place. The stories those mountains and the landscape tell us are fascinating.

The most dominant feature is Shasta Bally, rising 6,209 feet above sea level. Gazing at Bally, I begin to daydream, going back about 139 million years. A huge mass of magma lay deep within the Earth’s crust. For a time it fed area volcanoes. At some point, rather than being forced out as lava, the huge reservoir of magma was slowly pushed upward. As it neared the Earth’s surface, it cooled. Because it cooled very slowly, the minerals formed into grains or crystals, becoming a granitic rock called granodiorite. Wind, rain and snow worked over time to expose Bally’s irregular dome-shaped top. But Shasta Bally is much like an iceberg; more of its mass is hidden from view than what our eyes perceive. In fact, Bally is so large that it qualifies as a batholith, an unlayered, hardened reservoir of magma with a surface area greater than forty square miles and which increases in size as it stretches downward.

The shadow of a turkeys vulture passing overhead snaps me out of my time-travel reverie. I paddle the kayak so that I now face southeast. I reflect on the many hikes between the gold setting of the mountains towards the west, my continue to follow the ring of volcanic area greater than forty square miles.

As you enjoy Whiskeytown Lake’s cool waters this summer season, you may wish to send a good thought to those men and women who worked hard in the 1950s and early 1960s to establish the lake and the surrounding park lands. People like Clair Hill, Joe Patten, Senator Engle, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, and Undersecretary James Carr, along with his brother, local attorney and political activist Larry Carr.

It is inspirational to read how James Carr master-minded the concept of creating Whiskeytown National Recreation Area and how these two brothers, born and raised in Redding, were central to moving a Bureau of Reclamation Project into a national park site. It is with this same pioneering spirit that the Board of Directors and their friends are working hard to create an effective Friends of Whiskeytown organization that can leverage volunteers, passive revenue strategies, and donations to assist the National Park Service in improving the recreational resources of Whiskeytown.

In addition, the park staff is currently working hard to provide you with an outstanding recreational experience at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. Our summer trail crew is working to improve the Brandy Creek Falls and Boulder Creek Falls trails to access the bases of these lovely waterfalls. Our interpretive rangers and volunteers will be leading free kayak tours again this summer, and our maintenance crew is keeping all the facilities clean. New projects will be completed through the summer with the Youth Conservation Corps, park staff, volunteers and partners. Please keep in touch and feel free to call me with questions or suggestions. Thank you again for your support.

Jim Milestone, Park Superintendent

A Message From...
The Yellowbirds of Summer

by Tricia Ford, Visitor Use Assistant

Why did the Yellow Warbler fly a thousand miles to Whiskeytown to spend the summer?

Because it was too far to walk!

Yellow Warblers belong to a special group called Neotropical migratory birds. The majority are songbirds such as the Yellow Warbler and Common Yellowthroat, pictured here. Their bright colors and loud, cheerful songs are real attention getters. They spend most of the year in the tropics of Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean islands, migrating north to Canada and the United States during our summer.

When it’s summer here, it’s winter south of the equator. As mild as a tropical winter may be, the migratory songbirds prefer to head north to raise their young. What are the advantages of bringing up babies in the north? During our summer, we have more abundant, protein-rich food, like flying insects and caterpillars, to feed the nestlings. The northern summertime has longer hours of daylight during which the bird parents can forage for greater lengths of time to feed their brood. Then there is the sheer size of North America, which has a much greater land mass over which the birds can spread out, reducing the competition for food and nesting areas.

For songsters like the Yellowthroat and the Yellow Warbler, the summer months spent at Whiskeytown are not a laid-back vacation. Rather, they are a mad dash of mate-finding, nest-building, egg-laying, and infant-feeding. Kick the young out of the nest when they are ready to fly and catch their own food, pump up the fat reserves for extra energy, then fly back almost nonstop to the tropics before the days turn cool in the north.

Although National Park units such as Whiskeytown preserve streamside habitat for these little gems, wetlands are fast disappearing throughout the United States by encroaching development. However, the threat to Neotropical migratory songbirds is much greater outside of North America. Deforestation in the tropics continues at a brisk pace. Although the average American may not be able to do very much about what happens to the south of our borders, we can “Think globally, act locally,” as the saying goes. Learn about the waterways in your neighborhood and protect their natural flow and vegetation. Your actions will help maintain the population of migratory songbirds and ensure their colorful return every summer.

A Volunteer’s Perspective of Whiskeytown

by Ed Huey, Volunteer

I had the privilege to be at Whiskeytown Dam on the day in 1963 when President John F. Kennedy dedicated the structure. In the following years, Whiskeytown was to me a great place for recreation amid scenic natural beauty. Then, in 2002, I took a tour of the Camden House, located at the west end of the park. A whole new vista opened for me as I considered that Whiskeytown had historic as well as natural significance.

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Coexisting with Rattlesnakes

Sue Kelso, Whiskeytown Volunteer

Most people tend to be startled and move quickly at the sight of a snake slithering across their path, afraid they might be the target of a potentially serious bite. Of the 33 species of snakes found in California, the rattlesnake is the only one that is poisonous. They are generally not aggressive and strike only when feeling threatened or provoked. People often fear them, but it is the rattlesnake’s intent to stay away from people. Close encounters can be avoided by becoming familiar with the animal’s habits. The rattlesnake is an important part of the natural ecosystem. They benefit humans by preying on mice and rats which carry diseases and damage plants. For this reason it is important that people learn to coexist with them.

Whiskeytown is home to the western rattlesnake, which is known by the scientific name Crotalus viridis. They inhabit a wide variety of habitats in California and are absent only from true desert areas and large areas within the Central Valley where irrigated agriculture has eliminated habitat. They can be found at elevations ranging from sea level to 10,000 feet. The western rattlesnake is one of 29 species of snakes in the U.S. and one of six species of rattlesnakes in California. C. viridis vattes in color from gray, olive, green, to yellow, depending on habitat. The head is broad and triangular with a narrow neck. Hexagonal blotches along the body become more distinct as they approach the head and tail. Two diagonal stripes occur on the side of the head. Rattlesnakes generally reach 24-60 inches in length, males being larger than females.

As elsewhere, rattlesnakes in the park are found beneath shrubs, rock piles, and natural or artificial debris. They avoid wide-open spaces which offer little protection from predators and temperature extremes. The animals are most active during the warmer times of the year, usually April through September, when the temperature is between 70° and 90°F. Like other reptiles, rattlesnakes cannot regulate their own body temperature and confine their activity to the times of day when temperatures are within a comfortable range. Many become nocturnal when summer temperatures soar. Generally there aren’t many rattlers in any one area. The number present depends on how many hiding places there are and the amount of available prey. During the winter they go into torpor, which consists of the reptile dropping the temperature, sometimes to a life-threatening level, instead of entering a hibernation cycle.

Rattlesnakes mate between late spring and early summer. The males engage in a curious phenomenon known as “combat dance” where two of them entwine their bodies and lunge at each other in an attempt to assert dominance. Neither is harmed in the process. Another fascinating (but little known) fact about the rattlesnake’s life cycle is that the female gives birth to live young. The eggs remain in her body until they are ready to be hatched. She gives birth between August and early fall. Females first reproduce at age 4 or 5 and give birth to 1-34 young every other year.

Each rattler is born with only the first segment of the rattle, called a “prebutton.” Very young snakes are noiseless. The prebutton will be replaced by another “button,” or rattle, with each subsequent shedding. The buttons are composed of a protein similar to that found in a human fingerprint. The characteristic “rattling” sound the animal uses to warn potential enemies away is the result of two or more rattles on the tail hitting against each other. The animal shakes its tail 60 or more times per second. It is widely believed that a rattlesnake’s age can be determined by counting the number of segments, however, this isn’t so. They generally shed 3-5 times during their first summer and 1-3 times each year thereafter. The number is dependent on climatic conditions and food availability.

Rattlesnakes use venom to immobilize their prey, which allows them to save on energy spent subduing them. It also aids in digestion. Approximately 20% of defensive strikes do not contain venom. Scientists are unsure why this is so. Rattlesnake venom is complex, consisting of toxins that range from hemotoxins (which break down cells and tissues), to anticoagulants (that prevent the blood from clotting), and neurotoxins (that affect the nervous system). The substance is stored in glands toward the back of the head and injected through hollow fangs positioned parallel to the snake’s jaw line. Through muscular contraction, these hollow teeth are rotated into an erect position prior to biting prey or enemies.

Rattlesnakes are part of the family of snakes known as pit vipers, which are named for the heat-sensitive pits located just behind each nostril. These highly sensitive pits allow rattlers to detect temperature differences between their surroundings and other animals or objects up to several yards away. Using this “heat picture” they can detect the size of the creatures they come across. A larger heat image is likely to be an animal the snake will want to avoid, either because it is not a prey species or because it is a predator. This “heat vision” makes it possible for the animal to hunt effectively, even in total darkness. If rattlesnakes also rely on their vision which is effective at short distances.

To detect scent, the reptile uses its flicking tongue as a second nose. Air particles are gathered and then analyzed for scent. Rattlesnakes have no ears for hearing, instead, they sense vibrations through the ground. Though they feed almost exclusively on rodents, the animal will also eat insects, lizards, birds’ eggs and carrion (dead and decaying flesh). The snake can drop the bottom jaw out of its sockets, in effect “unhinging” it, and swallow whole prey, such as rabbits that weigh up to 2 pounds. In turn, rattlesnakes are preyed on by other snakes and animals, such as coyotes and hawks.

Rattlesnake bites are uncommon in humans, but they do occur. By taking some precautions, visitors at Whiskeytown can avoid them. When hiking, stay on trails and be aware of what’s ahead of you. Place your hands and feet only in areas where it’s possible to see beneath you and watch where you sit. Wear protective clothing such as ankle-high boots and long pants. Keep dogs on a leash according to park rules. Be especially watchful when climbing rocks or gathering firewood. Rattlesnakes pick up vibrations of hikers and will attempt to get out of the way. But if you do spot one, LEAVE IT ALONE. Remain motionless if you are very close (the animals usually strike only at moving objects), or back slowly away if you’re at a distance. If bitten, stay calm. Seek medical attention as soon as possible. Tissue damage around the site needs to be treated. Using a tourniquet, cutting around the area, attempting to suck the poison out, and using ice are no longer recommended.

Again, remember, rattlesnakes form an important part of the food chain. If you want to learn more about snakes in general and how to identify them, the Whiskeytown Visitor Center has some interesting books on these reptiles.

Whiskeytown Welcomes . . .

LaNoah Lormax is a student Trainee hired to work at Whiskeytown this summer as an Office Automation Clerk in the Facilities Management Division. He will be inputting data for the Facility Management Software System that tracks work spent maintaining all of the park facilities.

LaNoah, or “Noah” as he prefers to be called, is from Chicago, Illinois, and is a student at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He is studying electronic engineering and will be a sophomore this coming fall. This is his first time in the western part of the United States and he is enjoying seeing California for the first time. He will be working at Whiskeytown until the middle of August, when he will return to school in Louisiana.

Good Fire Breaks Make Good Neighbors

Two prescribed burns totaling 795 acres were successfully completed at Whiskeytown this spring. The Power Tower and Shasta Divide burns, located on the park’s eastern boundary, were ignited to reduce fine fuel, dead trees and pockets of dense vegetation in the recreation area. Prescribed fire is one of the tools used by fire managers to reduce the dangerous fuel loads in our forests and is part of Whiskeytown’s commitment to restore forest health and protect our neighbors from catastrophic wildfire.

You will see evidence of these burns as you hike along park trails and drive on park roads. The burns are clearly visible from the lake as well. At first glance, you may be dismayed to see the blackened areas with dead trees and brush. Take a second look and think about how the forest is more open now, quickly brightening with new growth, and providing more food sources for wildlife. Just as forests have done for thousands of years, this area will reviv...
Whiskeytown Volunteers-In-Parks

Visitor Center:
Located on Hwy 299 and Kennedy Memorial Drive, the Visitor Center is open daily during the summer from 9 am - 6 pm. All permits and passes are available here. A large selection of books and postcards is also available. (530) 246-1225

Park Headquarters:
Open Monday - Friday 8 am - 4:30 pm. Special Use Permits are available here. (530) 242-3400

Radio:
Listen to 1460 on your AM radio for information about Whiskeytown.

General Information:
Whiskeytown offers a variety of ranger-guided activities and programs for everyone. Please call 246-1225 for current information about any special programs or program schedule changes.

Junior Ranger:
Saturday 10:00-11:00 am
Kids ages 7 to 12 years old can make new friends while learning about the special wonders of Whiskeytown. Meet at the Oak Bottom Amphitheater.

Junior Firefighter:
Saturday 11:00 am-12 noon
Discover the role that wildfire plays in our national parks. Learn how firefighters manage fire to protect property, lives and ensure forest health. Meet at the Oak Bottom Amphitheater.

Camden House Tour:
Sunday 2:00-3:00 pm
Tour the 1852 home of pioneer/prospector Charles Camden and learn how he and his partner Levi Tower reshaped the landscape during the California Gold Rush. Meet across the footbridge at the Tower House Historic District.

Gold Panning:
Sunday 3:00 – 4:00 pm
Immediately following the Camden House Tour, discover the myths and realities of the Gold Rush Days, then try your luck at finding your own gold the old fashioned way. Pans and shovels are provided. Meet across the footbridge at the Tower House Historic District.

Puppet Show:
Saturday 8:00-8:45 pm (to August 19)
Both adults and kids are invited to join a cast of zany characters in a lively and entertaining program about how to safely enjoy Whiskeytown. Meet at the Oak Bottom Amphitheater.

Kayak Tours:
Daily tours. Reservations required.
Hop on a kayak built for two and explore some of the more quiet coves around Whiskeytown Lake while you learn more about the park. You must register in advance by calling (530) 243-5345.

Hospitals & Clinics:
Oak Bottom Urgent Care - (530) 247-4211, Redding Medical Center - (530) 244-5400, Mercy Medical Center - (530) 225-4000.

User Fees Improve Park

As part of the Fee Demonstration Program established by Congress, the recreation area retains 80% of the fees collected to pay for needed repairs and projects to improve visitor services and facilities. Fees collected at Whiskeytown have built universally accessible fishing piers, rehabilitated primitive campgrounds, improved wayside exhibits, installed new trails, trail signs, and bulletin boards, to name just a few projects.

This year the 2004 Whiskeytown Annual Park Pass increased from $20 to $25 to help fund park improvements. The pass is valid one year from date of purchase and is also honored at Lassen Volcanic National Park. The fee increase reflects an opportunity to create more of these meaningful projects in the park, which three quarters of a million people visit each year.

This year’s projects include replenishment of sand at Brandy Creek and Oak Bottom beaches, the replacement of deteriorated wooden picnic tables with accessible and durable concrete tables, the rehabilitation of six public restrooms, and the continued restoration of watersheds below Whiskeytown Dam to improve recreational opportunities and salmon habitat.

Annual park passes are available at the Visitor Center, open everyday, on the corner of Highway 299 and Kennedy Memorial Drive. Other federal passes are honored at Whiskeytown. Whiskeytown and available at the Visitor Center include the $50 National Park Pass and the $65 Golden Eagle (each pass valid for one year), the $10 Golden Age (a lifetime pass for age 62 and older), and the free Golden Access (a lifetime pass for the permanently disabled). One of these passes must be properly displayed on the dashboard of all vehicles parked within the Whiskeytown boundary, which includes Highway 299 West. Please call the Visitor Center at (530) 246-1225 for more information.

SERVICES:
Visitor Center:
Located on Hwy 299 and Kennedy Memorial Drive, the Visitor Center is open daily during the summer from 9 am - 6 pm. All permits and passes are available here. A large selection of books and postcards is also available. (530) 246-1225

Park Headquarters:
Open Monday - Friday 8 am - 4:30 pm. Special Use Permits are available here. (530) 242-3400

Radio:
Tune to 1460 on your AM radio for information about Whiskeytown.

Launch Ramps and Fishing Piers:
There are three boat ramps on the lake located at Whiskey Creek, Oak Bottom, and Brandy Creek Marina. There are handicapped accessible fishing piers at Whiskey Creek and Oak Bottom.

Marinas and Store:
Oak Bottom Marina provides gas, fishing supplies, souvenirs and other items for sale. Boats may be rented at Oak Bottom Marina.

Phones:
Phones are located at Oak Bottom (store, marina, and beach), Brandy Creek (beach and marina), and Whiskey Creek launch ramp, and the Visitor Center.

Post Offices:
French Gulch is open 8:00 am - 4:00 pm Monday through Friday; Saturday 8:30 am - 1:30 pm. Shasta is open 8:30 am - 5:00 pm (closed noon - 1:00 pm), Saturdays 7:00 am - 8:30 am.

Nearby Services & Attractions:

French Gulch Post Office, French Gulch Hotel and Restaurant, E. Frank Biar. Redding: 8 miles east and has all major services.

Suggested Reading:
Get your kayak permit at Key-Easkin Fall, 800-Auditorium Drive. (530) 243-8850 for current hours or for more information.

Camping at Whiskeytown

Reservations can be made up to five months in advance of your stay at Oak Bottom, Dry Creek, and the Whiskey Creek Group Picnic Area by calling the National Park Reservation Service at 1-800-365-2267 or using the website http://reservations.nps.gov. Overnight campers must purchase a daily, weekly or annual pass for their vehicle in addition to their campsite fee.

Oak Bottom Campground offers $8.00/night lakeside tent sites, $16.00/night tent sites, and $24.00/night RV sites. During the winter season, sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis at $8.00/night for tent and $7.00/night for RV sites. Reservations are recommended between May 15 to September 15.

Primitive Tent Campsites are available only on a first-come, first-served basis. Permits are available at the Visitor Center. Summer rates are $4.00/night and $6.00/night during the winter.

Dry Creek Group Tent Campground offers a campsite (tent only) at $7.00/night. Each has a maximum of 50 people and reservations are recommended between April 1 to September 30.

Whiskey Creek Group Picnic Area offers 3 group day-use picnic areas at a rate of $40 or $50 per day depending on which site is reserved. Reservations are recommended between April 1 to September 30.

Brandy Creek RV Campground offers sites on a first-come, first-served basis. Summer rate is $14.00/night and winter rate is $7.00/night. Permits are available at the fee drop box in the campground.

Wildfire Prevention Is Everyone’s Responsibility. Use established fire rings and NEVER leave your campfire unattended and make sure fire is completely out before you leave.

Darwin (Buggs) Danough began volunteering for Whiskeytown NRA in April 1997. He was 70 years young at the time. Since then he has contributed over 1400 hours staffing the Visitor Center and helping visitors find ways in which to explore, discover and enjoy the natural and cultural wonders the park has to offer. Not only is Buggs the oldest volunteer, he has also been volunteering at the VC the longest and has had many opportunities to see the changes that have occurred in the park. As an avid swimmer and kayaker, one of the changes he appreciates is the fact that personal watercraft (PWC) are no longer allowed on Whiskeytown Lake. “I see more and more people swimming and kayaking than when I first started volunteering for the park. It’s great to be able to jump in the water to go swimming or kayaking and not have to worry about what’s coming around the other side.”

Prior to volunteering for the park, Buggs made a career in the business of professional photography for 40 years working with various advertising agencies throughout the country. Today his son Scott has taken over the business in Orange County doing promotional photo shoots for various sporting and motorcycle companies. Buggs still prefers using his trusty 4 by 4 Rolleiflex camera over the newer digital technology his son uses. Another of Buggs’ favorite pastimes is finding and photographing special places in the park. You can see some of Buggs’ photos at the Visitor Center.

For more information about volunteering, please contact Volunteer Manager, Phyllis Swanson, at 242-3421.

PARK PASSES

Valid may be purchased at the Whiskeytown Visitor Center and at self-pay stations throughout the park. Place your pass on the driver’s side dashboard when you visit the park. By purchasing a pass, you are directly contributing to improvements at Whiskeytown.

Daily - $5
Valid at Whiskeytown on date of purchase only.

Annual - $25
Valid for one year from month of purchase. Also honored at Lassen Volcanic National Park.

National Park Pass - $50
Covers all National Parks with entrance fees. Valid for one year from month of purchase.

Weekly - $10
Valid at Whiskeytown for seven days from date of purchase.

Goldmine Access - Free
Lifetime pass for U.S. citizens and permanent residents who are permanently disabled.

Admission Fees

Open daily 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Entry Fee:
Daily - $5
Valid at Whiskeytown on date of purchase only.

Annual - $25
Valid for one year from month of purchase. Also honored at Lassen Volcanic National Park.

National Park Pass - $50
Covers all National Parks with entrance fees. Valid for one year from month of purchase.

Whiskeytown Nuggets

4 The Whiskeytown Nugget

Experience Your America

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA