

THE SIGNPOST

November - December 1987

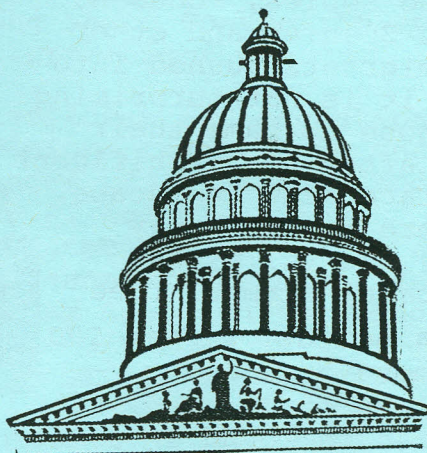
"NEW VISIONS FROM OLD TRADITIONS"
1988 PRAC/CSPRA/LEAGUE CONFERENCE
SLATED FOR SACRAMENTO

The 1988 PRAC/CSPRA/LEAGUE Conference is scheduled for March 11-14, at the Woodlake Resort & Convention Hotel in Sacramento.

Workshops will address cultural/natural heritage resource and people management issues. Social activities will include the annual "tall tales" contest, a golf tournament, and a spaghetti dinner and square dance. The dinner/dance will be held at the California State Railroad Museum. Tours scheduled include: a steam train ride, a behind-the-scenes look at the railroad museum, excursions along the American River Parkway, and a birding trip on the Sacramento River Delta.

Those who register before December 15, 1987 will receive conference admission, the steam train ride, and the museum dinner/dance for a special price of only \$48 per person.

A luncheon, honoring PRAC/CSPRA Executive Secretary Doug Bryce, will be held on Saturday, March 12th. A special "Hug A Tree" program, which teaches children what to do when lost in the outdoors, will be presented by Cheri Woods. The Conference keynote speaker will be Dr. Jim Holliday, President of the California Historical Society;



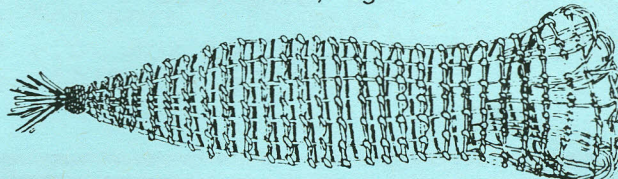
and San Francisco Chronicle environmental writer Harold Gilliam will close the Conference.

Conference committees still need volunteers, so contact Ken Gray at (916) 324-1828 if you can help. For Conference information and registration material call Patricia Posner at (916) 445-9672.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Now that winter is arriving rangers throughout California are breathing a sigh of relief. Though our pleasant climate continues to draw park visitors, the numbers are more manageable. This allows me to now reflect on some thoughts I wish pass on to you.

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NATURE'S CORNER

OAKS: CALIFORNIA'S LOST LEGACY

By
Graham Chisholm
California Nature Conservancy
Autumn 1987 Newsletter

Oakland, Paso Robles, Thousand Oaks.... As Spanish and other European immigrants rushed into California, it is not surprising that they chose to name their settlements after the magnificent oaks that graced the landscape. Europeans were particularly impressed by the Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*) a regal tree growing to a height of over 100 feet and almost as wide. Where it has not been eradicated, the Valley Oak can be found in areas of deep, rich alluvial soils.... In the lowlands the... oaks grow in dense riparian groves with heavy undergrowth; where in the Sierra foothills they form open park-like savannah. This endemic California oak was also common in the Coast Range from Los Angeles to Mendocino County. However, today the Valley oak woodlands has been dramatically reduced to a mere remnant of what stood in pre-European California.

The Valley Oak faced its initial threat with the European settlement of California. While unsuitable for construction, (settlers dubbed it "mush wood"), it was considered an excellent source of firewood. In the 1850's cords of Valley Oak were a common sight piled up on the Delta docks awaiting shipment down river to supply fuel for San Francisco's burgeoning population.



Illustrations: Craig Luker

The oak's preference for rich loam soils made it a target for destruction as settlers scouted to convert to fields, orchard, and open pasture. Channeling rivers has also adversely affected the Valley Oak by dropping the surrounding water levels.

As a result of these factors, Valley oak woodlands that once stretched miles wide... have been reduced to scattering of giant, relic trees around farmhouses and in local parks where they were preserved for their historic and aesthetic value.

Acorn production is normally quite variable from year to year. In good years, or "mast years", acorn production was sufficient to fatten bears for winter hibernation, fill acorn woodpeckers' granaries and scrub jays' caches, provide acorn meal for Native Americans and still provide enough seed for oak reestablishment. If these mast

years occurred during years of above average rainfall, then seedlings were able to produce a long enough root system to guarantee survival during the hot and dry summers typical of California's Mediterranean climate. While good years were not common, they were sufficient to guarantee the Valley oak's regeneration.

However, since the turn of the century the picture has been bleak. It's a novelty to find extensive areas with young trees.... most of the oaks are great big ones that were there when the Spanish came. Also, there's nothing replacing them. The reasons are numerous.

Livestock by Spanish and other European settlers set off, a chain of events that radically transformed California's grasslands and its associated animal populations. Native bunch grasses were replaced by Mediterranean annual grasses, which were more productive despite overgrazing....(This) led to a considerable increase in the population of seed-eating animals such as pocket gophers, ground squirrels, and field mice- all of which also consume acorns and oak seedlings.

The results have been disastrous. Recent studies indicate that only about two percent of the state's Valley Oak stands are well stocked with seedlings. Communities have undertaken planting programs in urban areas. However, unless more drastic preservation and planting measures are undertaken, the few ancient Valley Oaks that dot the California landscape may soon be remembered as relics of an earlier period.



1988 CPRS CONFERENCE SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY IN LONG BEACH

The 40th Annual California & Pacific Southwest Recreation & Park Conference & Exhibit Show will take place February 25-28, 1988 at the Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center.

Institutes and educational sessions relating to the park ranger profession include:

- P.R. and Marketing
- Channel Islands National Park
- Planned Concessions Programs
- Team Approach to Reduce Crime/Vandalism
- President's Commission on Americans Outdoors Update
- Parks and the Homeless
- Creative Fee Setting
- Design to Reduce Maintenance
- Park Promotion
- Risk Management
- Senior Outdoor Recreation
- Planning Recreation and Open Space
- Ranger: Generalist or Specialist?
- Computer Applications in Parks
- The "Take Pride In America" Campaign

Social events planned include: Park/Naval Facility/Arts Tours, Tennis/Golf Tournaments, Awards Banquets, and the All-Conference Dance.

Pre-registration for California Park & Recreation Society members is \$95, and \$190 for non-members. On-site registration ranges from \$125-250.

For more information contact: CPRS, P.O. Box 161118, Sacramento, CA., 95816, (916) 446-2777.

PARK PROFILES:

Stevens Creek: Santa Clara Valley's Grand Canyon

by
Christopher S. Crockett
Park Ranger
Stevens Creek-Rancho San Antonio
Parks Unit

IT IS AUTUMN, and under a canopy of sycamore and bay the waters of Stevens Creek tumble through the Santa Cruz Range foothills, originating from a spring high upon lofty Montebello Ridge. Over four miles of this unique horseshoe-shaped stream run through a regional park bearing its name. Above the trees are the slopes of an ancient gorge which tower over one thousand feet skyward. Now, the waters flow gently toward Stevens Creek Reservoir, where they are temporarily restrained before continuing to a merging with their salty counterparts in San Francisco Bay.

Stevens Creek County Park exists because of water. In 1844 it was water that drew pioneer Elisha Stephens to settle in these foothills above the present-day Silicon Valley hub of Cupertino. Between 1870 and 1945 it was water which drew valley inhabitants to find recreation and physical rejuvenation in the mineral-laden waters seeping from Soda Rock. In 1923, the water-formed canyon was officially preserved for the enjoyment of future generations when it was established as a regional park- the first in Santa Clara County. Today, this 785 acre area of creek, reservoir, and canyon attract over one-half million visitors annually.

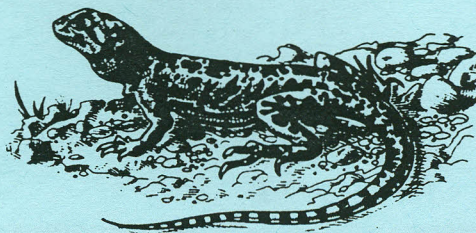
A Canyon Of Many Activities

These visitors see the park as a primeval haven from the nearby urban rush. The most popular

activity appears to be recreational driving. On sunny weekends hundreds of motorists can be seen on the parks scenic roadways. Many others can be found parked along numerous pullouts having streamside picnics, observing canyon vistas, or simply meditating on the area's natural beauty.

Away from their automobiles, people can be seen barbequing and socializing in one of Stevens Creek's four public picnic areas. One area sits on the shore of Stevens Creek Reservoir. Here families can see others sailing and windsurfing on this two mile long aquatic expanse. Fisherman, young and old, can also be observed trying to lure Green Sunfish, Largemouth Bass, and planted Rainbow Trout. Upstream, native trout lurk in numerous shady pools.

Below 230 foot high Stevens Creek Dam, two picnic areas lie along the tree-lined stream, allowing for quiet lunches and walks. A third picnic area, Villa Maria, rests on the site of one of many wineries which existed in the canyon. The old orchards, vineyards, and cellar were operated by Santa Clara University, which produced varietal wines between 1870 and 1945. During this time the property produced significant revenue for the University, and it was frequently used for retreats by faculty and students. The old winery was added to the park in 1974.



Stevens Creek contains four group picnic sites which attract companies, and church and family groups ranging from 50 to 150 persons. These areas also provide trailheads which wind up to spectacular vistas of Stevens Canyon and the Santa Clara Valley. Equestrians access these trails from adjacent stables, using the park and connecting trails into Fremont Older Open Space Preserve. Other paths meander along the shady creek, and on the exposed slopes above the reservoir.

In the park's Mt. Eden area is an archery range. The site is managed by a local bowhunters club which conducts various shooting events and provides for upkeep of targets and other facilities. Stationary and hunter targets are used by hundreds of archers annually on this 20 acre range.

The park is site of various unique events throughout the year. These include cyclocross, a mixture of cross-country cycling and running. During these events numerous participants can be seen rushing through underbrush and across rushing streams. The park is also used by local chapters of the Audubon Society, Sierra Club, and the California Native Plant Society for walks

Managing The Resource

Stevens Creek County Park is part of a five park unit which encompasses over 150 square miles in northwestern Santa Clara County. The unit is operated by a park manager, two senior rangers, three park rangers, and four park maintenance workers. In the summer the staff is supplemented by seasonal ranger and maintenance personnel.

Ranger staff functions are primarily split by season. Between Easter Week and Labor Day, rangers are primarily responsible for park protection. Specific duties include patrol/park law enforcement, facilities upkeep, and public safety. Rangers work closely with other rangers from the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, the California Highway Patrol, and the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office.

During Autumn and Winter Stevens Creek rangers duties expand to include park facility upgrade projects and park interpretive programming. Currently, rangers work with jail crews, and various community groups on park improvement projects. A major example is a one and a half year project to complete a hiking trail connecting the reservoir with the upper canyon. Park staff is working with The Trail Center, a non-profit organization, to finish the trail by January 1988. Other projects pending include trailhead redesigns, trail restoration, and design/placement of anti-bicycle barricade facilities.

Stevens Creek rangers are in the midst of devising a comprehensive interpretive plan to include a regular walks/program focusing on park pioneer history, native flora/fauna, and geology. Geology will be a major focus since the San Andreas Fault Zone runs through the upper part of Stevens Canyon.

From its geologic origins millions of years ago, Stevens Canyon and its park has become an important recreational resource for the people of the San Francisco Peninsula. We owe it all to water.

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PARK RANGERS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

DUES RENEWAL

We hope that you will continue your membership and continue to participate in PRAC activities and continue receiving the SIGNPOST and CAL RANGER.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIPCODE _____

PHONE: HOME _____ WORK _____

EMPLOYED BY _____

(STUDENTS: LIST SCHOOL AND MAJOR)

POSITION TITLE _____

REGULAR:\$25.00 _____

AGENCY:(1 - 10 Personnel - 2 Mailings) \$35.00 _____

.....(11 - 50 Personnel - 5 Mailings) \$60.00 _____

.....(More Than 50 Personnel - 10 Mailings) \$80.00 _____

STUDENT:\$5.00 _____

ASSOCIATE:\$10.00 _____

SUPPORTING:\$50.00 _____

PLEASE send your check or money order payable to PARK RANGERS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA, P. O. Box 28366, Sacramento, CA 95828

MEMBERSHIP DESCRIPTIONS:

REGULAR: Includes permanent, part-time, seasonal, retired, or managerial positions with uniformed park experience. (YOTING)

AGENCY: Includes park agencies which employ uniformed park personnel and agencies supporting the park ranger profession. (NON-YOTING)

STUDENT: Includes full-time students interested in or studying for positions in parks as uniformed personnel. (NON-YOTING)

ASSOCIATE: Includes anyone interested in the ranger profession, but who has not had uniformed experience. (NON-YOTING)

SUPPORTING: Includes any individual or group that wishes to financially contribute to the advancement of the ranger profession. (NON-YOTING unless individual is eligible for REGULAR membership)

- I recently received a report of a doe injured by a poacher in a Tulare County park. A ranger performed first aid and now the deer is alive and well. This serves to remind that we never know what might happen as those first steps are made into our parks each day.

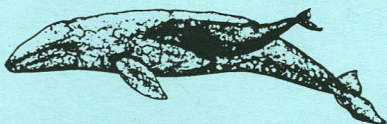
- PRAC recently sponsored a water rescue seminar, hosted by Tom Hofsommer and the Sacramento County Parks & Recreation Department. The two-day session was conducted by Rob McLeod from the Northern California Criminal Justice Training Center. The activity attracted local and state rangers from throughout California, and was termed by those in attendance as a great success.

- Our organization is close to reaching an agreement for an interpretive training session with one of the State's top instructors in this field. More information will be forthcoming as the program is finalized.

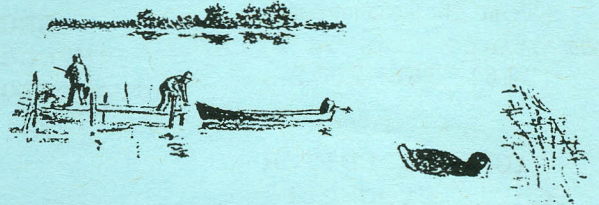
- Ranger training tapes are being produced for distribution to park agencies. Watch for further details in future issues of The Signpost.

There are many interesting items currently before the PRAC Board of Directors, therefore now more than ever is the time to become actively involved by attending a future board meeting. Help make PRAC work towards further professionalizing California's park rangers.

John Ramirez
PRAC President



For more information on Stevens Creek County Park contact: Chris Crockett, Park Ranger, Stevens Creek County Park, 11401 Stevens Canyon Road, Cupertino, CA., 95014, (408) 867-3654. If you have a "Park Profile" you wish to see in a future issue of The Signpost send your story to: Chris Crockett, The Signpost Editor, 806 South Saratoga Avenue, #P-206, San Jose, CA., 95129.



PRAC WATER RESCUE SEMINAR A SUCCESS

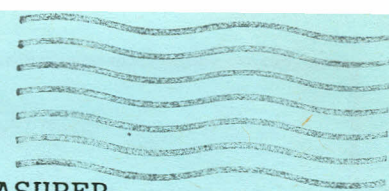
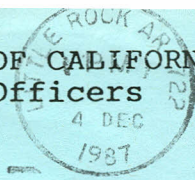
On October 29 and 30, PRAC sponsored a water rescue seminar in conjunction with Valley Representative Tom Hofsommer, and the Sacramento County Parks & Recreation Department. The two-day course was instructed by Mr. Rob McLeod from the Northern California Criminal Justice Training Center.

Locations in Sacramento included the rapids of the American River and Lake Natoma. Topics covered included: whitewater rafting operation, whitewater survival, rigging systems, motorboat operation, and flatwater rescue techniques.

The course was attended by nearly a dozen rangers from municipal/county agencies throughout California, and with the California Department of Parks & Recreation. Mr. McLeod's instructional techniques were praised by all in attendance. We look forward to a larger, expanded offering next year.

For overview information on the 1987 PRAC Water Rescue Seminar write to: Chris Crockett, The Signpost Editor, 806 South Saratoga Avenue, #P206, San Jose, CA., 95129.

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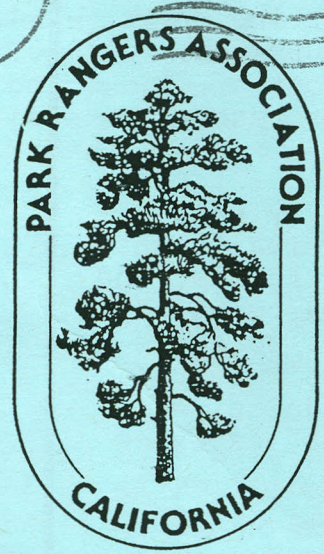
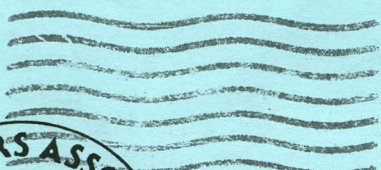
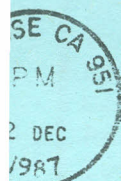
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