

BIG TREE

CALAVERAS BIG TREES ASSOCIATION • 209-795-3810

BULLETIN

CALAVERAS BIG TREES STATE PARK • ARNOLD, CA



Volume 28, Number 3

Fall 2009

From the President

In spite of all the uncertainty, we had a wonderful summer at the Park, with a record number of visitors as well as sales in the Visitor Center Gift Shop. We had standing room only at our junior ranger and cubs programs, impressive numbers for Family Day, and a full house for our John Muir Laws seminar in September. By the way, if you missed his wonderful presentation, you can see an encore on our website at www.bigtrees.org.

Our Association, in cooperation with the California State Parks Foundation, hosted an "I Love State Parks" weekend in August as part of our ongoing involvement in the campaign to keep state parks open. CBTA Board Member Bunny Firebaugh organized the two-day event. We filled banners with heart-shaped postcards signed by more than 900 people, which sent a visual message to state legislators holding hearings on park closures.

The Parks Foundation has kept the Governor's feet to the fire by directing a grass roots campaign that has resulted in a public outcry over proposed park closures. It must be working -- Labor Day has come and gone, and state parks are still open. The Parks Foundation is working toward getting the State Park Access Pass on a future ballot. This plan would give stability to the state parks system. Although we remain open for now, the 2009 Budget Act calls for another \$22 million in funding cuts for state parks next year.

Kudos to Marilyn Regan and Betty Woodward for their outstanding job in bringing us Family Day in August. And thanks to you, our members, park docents, park staff, administrative staff and supporters for making the day such a success. We couldn't do it without you. Another wonderful day connecting kids to nature, nurturing a love and respect for it... enabling them to be the future protectors of our parks.

Marcy Crawford

We Have Survived! What's Next?

Yes, due in part to the efforts of the members and volunteers of the Calaveras Big Trees Association (you!), our Park will remain open to provide recreation, education and a unique place in the Giant Sequoia forests of California for the citizens of this state, the nation and the world. Now it is time to begin planning for the future and to do that we need YOU TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2010 (a big thanks to those of you who have already done so).

CBTA cannot continue to provide the Park with funds to continue its many educational and interpretive programs without the support of our members. Such programs as the recent seminar by John Muir Laws, Jr. Rangers and Cubs, campfire programs and Family Day will be just a memory.

The CBTA Board of Directors is currently working with our Park staff to determine how CBTA can provide any additional help to assure that the Park will not only be open in the future but will be an even better experience for our visitors. Specific actions and programs will be developed. However, the one essential strategy is to have a strong and committed membership and your renewal is key to achieving that goal.

On the back page of the Bulletin is a Membership Renewal Form. Please use this form and send your dues for 2010 to the address shown. The renewal form can also be found and printed from our website by clicking on "join CBTA." If you missed your 2009 dues it would be greatly appreciated if you could include dues for 2009 also.

Have any friends enjoyed Big Trees State Park but haven't joined CBTA? Make a copy of the renewal form for them also or let us know and we will send them a formal invitation to join.

Thank you for your previous support and we look forward to seeing you at the Park in the future.

John Woodward

Holiday Sale - November 20 - Save the Date

This year's annual CBTA Holiday Sale will take place on Friday, November 20 from 11:00 am - 3:00 pm. CBTA members, docents and state employees who shop that day will save 40% on most items and 30% on books. This is CBTA's way of saying "Thanks!!" for all you do for Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

The sale is open to the public on Saturday and Sunday, November 21 and 22, from 11:00 am - 3:00 pm. CBTA members, docents and state employees who choose to shop those days will receive their standard discount.

Enjoy hot apple cider and homemade goodies, and get great deals on all your holiday needs while supporting the Park.

A Santa's Express donation station will be in the Visitor Center during the sale, so please bring in your donations of non-perishable food items. Santa's Express makes holiday meals a reality for families that otherwise may not have one.

Bunny Firebaugh

New Giant Sequoia Research

Recent observations of Giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) root systems in groves in the southern Sierra Nevada gives us some new and very different information about these marvelous trees. We have always heard that Giant Sequoia root systems are shallow and spreading in order to collect enough water and soil nutrients to support the growth of such large trees. Where they occur on gentle slopes with a close and consistent water source, this is generally true.

But in some cases, Giant Sequoias seem able to adapt their root systems to very different conditions. Scientists have made observations in groves where Giant Sequoias are growing on very steep slopes far from a water source. In those cases, it was noted that some trees were sending roots down from the main lateral roots 60 feet or more in search of water!

Wendy Harrison

Visitor Center - A magnet for Visitors!

Our little Visitor Center at Calaveras Big Trees State Park is like the little engine that could, because we are having another amazing year! Our sales continue to grow each year. Year-to-date we have seen an increase in park visitors coming into the Visitor Center. More visitors means more money for the interpretive programs here at the Park!

If you haven't been to the Visitor Center in a while, please come in and check out all our new and different merchandise. The sales committee and I are trying to get Green, buy American and include items for babies. Some of our new Green items include stainless steel water bottles and travel mugs, battery-less flashlights and blankets made from 100% recycled fibers. Our made in America items include MarqArt wood boxes, For Bear Feet socks, Sugar woodcrafts (who make the cedar book marks among other things) and much more! We have expanded our infant and toddler clothing to include long sleeve shirts. We also have board books and a great new item called Bug Jug Fill and Spill for six months plus, a must for hours of fun.

The Visitor Center is a great place to buy unique gifts at a one of a kind shop. Come and visit us at our Holiday sale and bring some non-perishable food for our Santa's Express bin. Thanks for supporting Calaveras Big Trees State Park!

Tami Rakstad-Schaner



Winter in the North Grove

Courtesy Dan Wendin

Yellow-jackets - not all bad

Many park visitors are very worried about the possibility of encountering large wildlife species such as bears or mountain lions. However, it is often the smaller animals that cause more trips to the hospital and ruined picnics than our large furry friends. This summer's peak yellow-jacket population is a prime example.

What is the purpose of yellow-jackets? Their role in the natural community is predator and scavenger. They prey on many pest insect species, and help decompose dead animals of many kinds. They are social hunters that live in colonies containing workers, queens and males. Colonies are annual with only inseminated queens overwintering. Survival of the overwintering queens determines the size of the population.

Queens emerge during the warm days of late spring, select a nest site, and build a small paper nest in which eggs are laid. After eggs hatch from the 30 to 50 brood cells, the queen feeds the larvae for about 18 to 20 days. The larvae pupate, emerging later as small, infertile females called workers (all females are capable of stinging).

By mid-summer, the first adult workers emerge and work on nest expansion, food foraging, care of the queen and larvae, and colony defense. From this time until her death in the fall, the queen remains inside the nest laying eggs. The colony expands rapidly reaching a maximum size of 4,000 to 5,000 workers, and a nest of 10,000 to 15,000 cells in late summer! At peak size, reproductive cells are built with new males and queens produced. They stay in the nest and are fed by the workers. New queens build up fat reserves to overwinter.

The males leave the parent colony to mate. After mating, males die quickly. Abandoned nests decompose and disintegrate during the winter. The cycle is repeated in the spring.

Although adults mostly feed on items rich in sugars and carbohydrates (fruits, flower nectar, tree sap), the larvae feed on proteins (insects, meat, fish). Adults chew and condition the meat fed to the larvae. Larvae secrete a sugar material relished by the adults. In late summer, foraging workers change their food preference from meats to ripe, decaying fruit, or scavenge human garbage

and soda, since larvae in the nest fail to produce enough sugar to satisfy the workers.

Depending on the species, nests can either be aerial or concealed - usually underground. The nest can reach the size of a basketball by the end of the season. Nests are made from wood fiber chewed into a paper-like pulp; often you can see the individual strips of paper made by the insect.

Yellow-jackets are important part of the natural community, even though they can cause us pain as they aggressively go about their business.

Wendy Harrison

Family Day Success

On August 15, 2009, Calaveras Big Trees State Park saw a crowd of between 1500 and 1700 happy children and adults enjoying our annual Family Day. By all accounts the day was a huge success. There were carriage rides, delicious lunches, butterflies and raptors to see and hold. Reptiles, as usual, were a crowd pleaser with big groups handling the snakes all day. Even adults!

Two bands entertained during the day - Mother Lode Brass and Reed Band and Passin' Thru. There was also a juggler wandering through the crowd and attracting audiences.

Several crafts and face painting were especially enjoyed by the children, as were the fire engines - you could actually spray the fire hose (but watch out for the birds in the trees).

This annual event is always a special treat and a "thank you" to the community that supports us during the year. See you next year!

Marilyn Regan
Family Day Chairperson

In Memoriam

Charles Gilmore
Rich Jimenez
Norm Ornellas
Bernice Goodell

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We're on the web: www.bigtrees.org

Our Mission : To assist and support the interpretation and environmental education programs at Calaveras Big Trees State Park

Calaveras Big Trees Association
Membership/Renewal Form
PO Box 1196, Arnold, CA 95223-1196 • 209-795-3840

Name _____
Address* _____
City _____ State ____ Zip _____
E-mail* _____

*Please advise of any change of address or e-mail.

Please circle choice below and make payment to:
Calaveras Big Trees Association (CBTA)
PO Box 1196, Arnold, CA 95223-1196

Individual	\$15
Family	25
Organization/Business	100

In addition to your membership you may wish to include a tax-deductible gift to further support interpretive and educational programs at the Park.

Big Tree Bulletin

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Betty Ann Prescott, Anne Saunders,
John Woodward

The Board meets monthly the last Wednesday at 1:00 pm.

The CBTA dues year is the calendar year (Life Members excepted). Expiration date appears on your mailing label.
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