



# Big Tree

**BULLETIN**

C A L A V E R A S   B I G   T R E E S   A S S O C I A T I O N

## From CBTA's President

by Marilyn Regan

Who would have thought that the sound of heavy construction equipment would be so welcome in the Park? But that is definitely the case these days. After many years of disappointment and delays, at last the much-awaited new Visitor Center is going to become a reality. Ground was broken on June 18.

My personal thoughts when I consider what has happened over the past 15 years (that is how long this project has been in the works) are for a great big THANK YOU to all the previous presidents, board members, CBTA members, docents and staff for their patience and, especially, for their generosity that has finally resulted in this center becoming a reality. It took a lot of effort and perseverance to bring this to fruition with the \$500,000 that was raised and given to the state. So I guess we can tolerate a little construction noise for the next few months.

I feel privileged to be elected to the position of Board President at this exciting time. The election of Board Members occurred at the Annual Meeting in June. I follow a very efficient and hard-working President, Marcy Crawford, and am grateful for her continued guidance and support.

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that the future is going to be a challenge. As the state budget continues to be running a huge deficit and funds keep being cut from state parks, new ways of managing and new priorities will need to be set. We really can't envision right now what this will mean, but you can be certain that the Board of Directors will

be looking at all possibilities. We are fiscally sound as an organization and will continue to be in the future.

As outlined in the strategic plan that was developed last year, we need to be proactive in making our case to the surrounding community and eliciting their support to continue to keep our Park where it should be—the number one attraction in Calaveras County.

In that regard, I am looking for members who are interested in serving on an Event-Planning Committee. This will be a new committee of the Board and will be responsible for looking at the "Big Picture". We need committee members with fresh ideas and a commitment to keeping our Park solvent and pertinent to the community we serve. This could mean many different things and this committee will be a very important addition to our Board. Please call me and we can talk about it. My home phone number is 795-7385. Welcome all idea people!!!!!!!

## New Board Members

by Marilyn Regan

**Tom Jones** will be working on the Board to develop long-term funding. He has a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife Management and a Masters in Aquatic Biology. Tom worked 23 years with US Public Health Service and the EPA. He has also been a real estate broker for 18 years. He and his family have been coming to the Ebbetts Pass area since the early 1970's and made the permanent move to Arnold in 1995. He and his wife, Marie, have been married for 51 years. They have 3 children and 7 grandchildren.

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**Vida Kenk** has a PhD in Science from Harvard and taught at San Jose State University and also was the interim Dean of the College of Science. Retirement began in 2010. She and her husband, Bill, have both been docents at the Park and that possibility was a factor in the choice of a place to retire. Both of their children got married in 2010 and had celebrations at the Park. Vida will be working with Steve Stocking to schedule seminars and will be heading the committee for recipients of our scholarships.

**George Leong** retired from P.G&E. as an IT specialist, skills that will be used by the Association. His wife is a Nurse Director at Eden Medical Center and they have four sons. They recently moved full-time to Arnold. He loves to hike with his two dogs and keeping up his skills as an IT nerd (his phrase). He will be serving as Membership Chair.

## **Park Update** *by Gary Olson, Superintendent 1*

Greetings! I think we all are happy to feel the warmth of the sun after the long hard winter.

With summer here, we are now able to see the full effects of the winter on the Park. As usual, there were many down trees throughout the Park, blocking trails, damaging picnic tables, and, yes, adding an unplanned sky light in Jack Knight Hall. The good news is that the staff, with the help of the inmate crews and the trail volunteers, were able to get the trails open in record time. The picnic tables were repaired by the second week of June, the 30 plus trees down in the North Grove campground were removed prior to opening for the season, and most of the visitors never knew just how much damage we endured.

With the long winter, Mother Nature seems to be behind schedule, as the wildflowers are now blooming throughout the Park and the meadow is just about to reach full bloom. I would recommend everyone to get out and walk through the meadow before the new boardwalk project begins on August 15. Be careful as the current boardwalk is uneven and a little shaky, but it will be worth your efforts.

The new Visitor Center has been approved, the contract signed, and all permits completed. The contractor will be arriving to set up on July 15, with the first shovels in the ground on Monday, July 18. The contract was awarded to Menghetti Construction out of Modesto. The contractor has 495 days to complete the project, unless there are weather related delays. The contract award was for \$2,644,000.00.

It is important that everyone understands, and, makes it clear to all the visitors, that the funding for the new Visitor Center is not from our current budget. It is Prop 84 money that was approved by the voters many years ago, but is just now being released to complete the projects. The Prop 84 money was made possible through bond sales, and the funds were just recently released for some projects, the Visitor Center being one of them.

The financial situation for the Park operations has not improved. This fiscal year we are working on a budget that is approximately 50% less than we had in 2006. What that means to the visitors is that the restrooms will be cleaned less frequently, time to make repairs to the facilities will be increased, campgrounds and restrooms will be closing earlier than in past years, more projects will be added to the increasing list of deferred maintenance needs, and some facilities may be closed if we do not have the funds to make the required repairs.

The good news is that we were able to purchase some of the supplies to repair the roof on Jack Knight Hall and we have scheduled the repairs to begin after Family Day.

Meadow Boardwalk Project is set to begin August 16. The CCC's have been contracted to provide the labor to build a new boardwalk through the meadow that will be ADA compliant. The materials have been delivered and the crew will be establishing a camp in the maintenance yard in mid-August. The project should be completed before December. The project was funded through special funds that are not part of this year's operating budget.

Thanks to all of you who volunteer your time in the Park; we are still providing a positive experience for most of the visitors. Visitors frequently compliment the volunteers on their programs, walks, and trail work. The CBTA has been instrumental in helping us provide the staff to continue the interpretive activities for the summer.

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### **In Memoriam**

**Jake Miller  
Mary Mollett**

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## **New Visitor Center** by Gary Olson, Superintendent 1

The new Visitor Center contract for \$2,644,000.00 has been signed and awarded to Menghetti Construction. Kent Evje is the Superintendent for Menghetti Construction on the project. Kent said the goal is to have the building framed and enclosed before the winter break in November. The contractor is limited to only working Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. This should help us manage the weekend crowds.

The main parking lot will be limited in size due to the construction activity and the safety fencing. This will increase the need to park more cars along the picnic areas near the Standing Sentinel. Most of the parking issues will only occur on the weekends, when the demand is the highest. To help reduce the parking issues, I would ask the staff and volunteers to park along the dump station road or past the Standing Sentinel tree.

The construction project will involve digging trenches through the parking lots, behind the ranger office, and along the restroom near the Warming Hut. I anticipate these will be among the first areas to be impacted and we will need to reroute vehicles as needed. Due to the late

start date, impacts to the summer visitors will be limited, as schools resume as early as August 17.

You may notice an increase in construction vehicles, trucks, and noise in the North Grove area due to the construction project. Unfortunately that is a normal part of the construction process and we will not be able to limit that impact. Please advise visitors that the noise should end at 5 p.m. and will not be present on the weekends.

The building footings and other concrete work should begin quickly to meet the time schedule. This may require us to close areas of the parking lot periodically to facilitate the large trucks. We will try to limit the impact as much as possible, but we do not want to hinder the construction progress.

Once the building is framed and enclosed, the interior construction can begin. Splitrock has been awarded the contract for the interior design and construction. Installation of the exhibits will be as soon as the building is ready.

If you receive complaints about the project, please send them to me, give them my contact information, or get their contact information so I may address the problems.

*How glorious a greeting the sun gives the mountains.*

*~ John Muir*

## **Welcome to CBTA.....**

### *General Membership:*

Dwight Anderson, Turlock, CA  
Kathleen Ball, Copperopolis, CA  
Sallie & Jim Bearden, Dorrington, CA  
Stephanie Jensen, Los Altos, CA  
John McClain, Dublin, CA  
Grady McCullough, Murphys, CA  
Jean Porter, Arnold, CA  
Mary & Richard Raso, Pleasant Hill, CA

Jo Waudby Sahm, Arnold, CA  
Gil Santana, Milpitas, CA  
Julia Shelby, Mountain Ranch, CA  
Wayne & Donna Staub, Camp Connell, CA  
Joe & Patty Symkowick, Sacramento, CA  
Jeremy Terhune, Stockton, CA  
Patty Turcotte, Arnold, CA

### *Business Membership:*

Jetter Associates, Lutherville, MD  
Murphys Historic Hotel, Murphys, CA

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## Summer on the Trails.....

Come enjoy a day of hiking in Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

**North Grove Trail:** This is a gentle 1.5 mile loop taking you through the North Grove of Giant Sequoia. There are numbered markers along the path that correspond to numbers in the Trail Guide. These guides are available in the Visitor Center (along with hiking sticks, water bottles, etc.) or at the trailhead. The guide will give the history of some of the more spectacular trees such as the Three Graces of Greek Mythology, the Pioneer Cabin Tree, the Abraham Lincoln Tree, the Sacrificial Tree, the Father of the Forest, the Old Bachelor Tree, Siamese Twins and the Granite State Tree. In all, this grove contains approximately 150 mature Giant Sequoia trees. The North Grove also offers views of Sugar Pines, White Fir, Incense Cedar and Ponderosa Pines in their natural settings. You will cross the Big Tree Creek, which drains the North Grove basin. Although tiny, this creek is able to support a population of native trout. Sierra redwood groves are always located near a reliable source of water. Allow at least one hour for this walk.

**Three Senses Trail:** This 600 foot loop begins about 10 feet from the North Grove "Big Stump" area. Trail markers interpret the forest through printed word and Braille.

**Grove Overlook Trail:** Just over 1/2 mile, this trail climbs the ridge above the North Grove to provide views of the upper portions of the Big Trees.

**River Trail:** You may begin this trail from the Big Stump area or by driving to the Scenic View Overlook parking area; it ends at the Stanislaus River. It is approximately a 4 mile trip each direction and since the elevation change from the scenic overlook to the river is over 1,000 feet, it is considered a difficult hike.

**Lava Bluffs:** This moderately difficult loop trail takes you through interesting geologic formations where you will also find beautiful wildflowers in the Spring. It is 2.2 miles long

and has many ups and downs. It is on a south facing slope and can be quite hot on a summer afternoon. The trailhead is about 5 miles down the Parkway from the Park entrance.

**South Grove Trail:** This moderately difficult loop trail will take you through the South Grove Natural Preserve, a grove of Giant Sequoia close to ten times the size of the North Grove. It is relatively remote and pristine and contains the largest trees in the Park. The lack of human influence is an outstanding feature of this preserve. Many Sierra redwood groves were severely disturbed following their discovery by settlers in the late 1800's. This Calaveras South Grove Natural Preserve offers a unique opportunity to visit and study this ancient forest ecosystem in its primeval condition. You will cross Beaver Creek to enter the South Grove. The animals for which Beaver Creek was named have not been sighted in the Park for many years. Looking down from the bridge, you have a view of the 130 million-year-old granite rock that underlies the South Grove and forms the backbone of the Sierra Nevada. In the Grove, it remains almost completely covered by soil and alluvium, but here the creek has eroded those layers, exposing the rock. The trail is 3.5 miles, with a side trail a little over one mile long which leads to the Agassiz Tree, the largest tree in the Park. The trail head is at the South Grove parking lot, about 9 miles down the Parkway from the Park entrance. Allow 1-3 hours for the loop; 2-4 hours if you take the spur trail to the Agassiz Tree for a 5 mile hike.

**Bradley Grove Trail:** A moderate loop trail that begins on the left side of the South Grove Trail just after the Beaver Creek Bridge. The main feature of this 2.5 mile loop is a grove of Giant Sequoia planted in the 1950's by South Grove caretaker Owen Bradley. The Grove consists of about 150 30-year-old Sierra Redwoods growing on the far side of a small meadow. Mr. Bradley planted seedlings in this spot because of abundant water and plenty of sun. In addition to the planted trees, you will also see two very old and large naturally occurring Sierra redwoods and their offspring, as well as a stand of mountain dogwood and white alder.

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*I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded  
to stay out till sundown, for going out, I  
found was really going in..... John Muir Journal, 1913*

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## Family Day

by Vaughn Smith

Family Day 2011 is proceeding on schedule. All of the favorite presenters from former years have committed to attending this year's celebration. A big **thank you** to all who have signed up to help, and a reminder that there are still some places where we need help.

The big news is that we are relocating many of the booths to the area behind Jack Knight Hall. And, because of the work on the new Visitors Center, parking will be limited. Most of the parking will be across the road in the Maintenance Yard. We will need extra help over there to direct traffic, etc. The carriage ride will also have a different route, due to the construction site. We are going to have an additional amphitheater behind Jack Knight Hall which will alternate performances with the Campfire area.

We anticipate a fun-filled day with lots of sunshine, happy faces and good food, great music and stimulating programs. Saturday, August 20 - see you there!

## Annual Meeting Recap

by Marcy Crawford

Record numbers of people attended the Annual Meeting and Picnic of the Calaveras Big Trees Association on June 18 at the Park. In addition to enjoying a delicious potluck luncheon, the membership in attendance elected the Board of Directors for the coming year, honored outgoing Board Members, met the new intern, and congratulated the scholarship winners.

*Retiring Directors:* Two of our Directors retired from the Board this year. CBTA recognized them at the Annual Meeting for their dedication to our "Big Trees", and giving so generously of their time and talent. **Betty Ann Prescott** was no stranger to Big Trees State Park when she joined the Board in 2006. A docent since 1983, she worked with Alex Horvath mapping the redwood trees in the South Grove. She also drew working plans for a new interpretive center. Betty Ann is currently constructing a model of the New Visitor Center, which will be displayed at the Park. **John Woodward** has served as Membership Chair since joining the Board in 2009. He totally revamped our membership materials, which increased membership in all categories. Most impressively, he boosted our business members by 2,900%. Amazing! Although retiring as a Board member, John continues to work with Bruce

Thomsen as co-project manager to select a designer for the sales area and CBTA office in the New Visitor Center.

*Intern:* CBTA's intern this year is Clarice Baumgartner, a junior at the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire. Clarice is majoring in education and history. Arriving in time for the Memorial Day holiday, she began her internship during one of the busiest weekends in the Park. By all accounts, she is doing a great job!

*Scholarships:* CBTA had so many worthy applicants for the Emily Hewitt Scholarship that the Board decided to award two \$1,000 scholarships this year. Kristen Lee Bunting was awarded the Emily Hewitt Scholarship. Kristen attends University of California, Berkeley, where she is majoring in Conservation and Resource Studies with a focus on wildlife conservation, ecology and public education. Misha Leong was awarded the Calaveras Big Trees Association Scholarship. Misha is a graduate student at UC Berkeley in the Department of Environmental Sciences, Policy and Management studying California native bee ecology. Misha attended the Annual Meeting and accepted her scholarship from incoming President Marilyn Regan.

*CBTA Business:* The Annual Meeting marked the last day of Marcy Crawford's two-year presidency. Marilyn Regan presented her with a personal gift and Lifetime Membership in CBTA for her dedicated service to the Association and the Park. Bruce Tallakson, Treasurer, reported that the Association is "alive and well" and operating in the black. Tami Rakstad-Schaner, Retail Manager, reported that sales at the Visitor Center were running above average compared to prior years. Scot Bishop, co-chair for Family Day, gave the membership an update on the upcoming August 20 event.

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**WHOEVER GAINS THE  
BLESSING OF ONE MOUNTAIN  
DAY IS RICH FOREVER**

**~ John Muir**

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## Ground Broken for New Visitor Center

by Marcy Crawford

The June 18 Annual Meeting included a special component this year. The crowd eagerly anticipated the extra added attraction, and it was saved for the end of the day's events. This grand finale was the long-awaited groundbreaking ceremony for the new Visitor Center.

CBTA President Marcy Crawford welcomed the crowd and introduced the guest speakers, including: Merita Callaway, Calaveras County Board of Supervisors, District 3, talked about the long road to this wonderful event. Vince Sereno, Department of Parks and Recreation, Sector Superintendent, recalled his days as Park Superintendent at Big Trees and the early efforts for the new center. Michael Romo, Department of Parks and Recreation Project Manager, Northern Service Center, spoke about the future of the new interpretive building. Scott Wassmund, Northern District Chief, noted that Big Trees is one of the very few parks with a project of this size moving forward. He, too, has been involved with the new center for many years, and said he is so pleased that we will be able to provide visitors with this wonderful interpretive experience. Gary Olson, Park Superintendent of Big Trees State Park, gave the closing remarks thanking CBTA for its dedication in not giving up on the new center. He praised the organization for raising and donating \$500,000 for this project. Gary recognized the important role CBTA plays in supporting the delivery of high quality educational and interpretive programs at the Park.

At the conclusion of the program, Crawford, Callaway, Sereno, Romo, Wassmund and Olson walked to the construction site. After donning hard hats, they lifted their shovels and broke ground for the new center slated for completion in the Summer of 2013.



PHOTO  
BY  
TAMI  
RAKSTAD-  
SCHANER

l to r: Michael Romo, Vince Sereno, Merita Callaway, Scott Wassmund, Marcy Crawford, Gary Olson

## This 'n That.....

Please continue to use your S.H.A.R.E.S. card when shopping at SaveMart Supermarkets and Lucky Stores. CBTA receives 3% from your purchases and it doesn't cost you a cent! Don't have a card? Come to the Visitor Center or call (209) 795-3840 and we will send you one. It is an easy way to support our Association's goal of ongoing interpretive programs.

Reminder: There are two remaining seminars left to be presented in this season. September 24 Joe Medeiros will present "Sierra Nevada Winter Ecology" and October 1 Dr. Bill Tweed will present "The Future of our Sierra Parks". Both seminars will be on a Saturday and will be at Jack Knight Hall from 10:00 a.m. to noon. The seminars are free and open to the public, but there is an admission fee to the Park of \$8.00 per car. Pack a lunch, bring the family, and plan on spending the day among the Giant Sequoias. Or make a day of it by having lunch or dinner at one of the restaurants along the Highway 4 corridor.

The 10th Annual Big Trees Fall Art Show presented by Arts of Bear Valley will be held in Jack Knight Hall from August 18 through September 5. Hours are daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The show features original art work by local artists. CBTA receives a percentage of sales to help support interpretive programs within the Park.

*Nature  
is ever at work building and  
pulling down, creating and destroying,  
keeping everything whirling and flowing,  
allowing no rest but in rhythmical motion,  
chasing everything in endless song out of  
one beautiful form into another.*

*~ John Muir*

## FUN FACTS.....

**PORCUPINES** can float in water! They also have the distinction of being the third largest rodent, behind the capybara and the beaver. They eat leaves, herbs, twigs, green plants, and even bark. They often climb trees to find food. Their quills are modified hair coated with thick plates of keratin and can be released by contact with them or drop out when the porcupine shakes its body but, contrary to ancient beliefs, they cannot be projected at attackers.

**SQUIRRELS** forget where they hide about half of their nuts! The squirrel-like animals most commonly seen in our Park are the Douglas Squirrel (also called Chickaree), Western Gray Squirrel, California Ground Squirrel, the Long-Eared Chipmunk, and the Flying Squirrel.

**OWLS** are one of the only birds who can see the color blue! Types of owls in our Park include the Great Horned Owl, Spotted Owl, Western Screech Owl, and the Northern Pygmy Owl.

**MOSQUITOES** prefer children to adults; blondes to brunettes. They are also attracted to the color blue twice as much as any other color.

**BEAVERS** can swim half a mile under water on one gulp of air. Baby beavers are called kittens.

A **WOODPECKER** can peck twenty times a second. We have eight varieties of woodpeckers in our Park: Pileated Woodpecker, White-Headed Woodpecker, Red-Breasted Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Acorn Woodpecker, and the Williamson's Sapsucker.

A **BIRD** requires more food in proportion to its size than a baby or a cat.

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George Leong	Membership

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Susan Ralya	Editor
Sue Hoffmann	Circulation/Mailing

**CBTA Staff:**

Tami Rakstad-Schaner	Retail Manager
Sue Hoffmann	Admin/Retail Assistant
Debbie McGee	Bookkeeper

The Board meets monthly the last Wednesday at 1:00 p.m. and is open to the public. Please call the office at 795-3840 to confirm meeting date, time and place.

The CBTA dues year is the calendar year. You may renew your membership by mailing a check payable to CBTA in the envelope enclosed with your Winter Bulletin or renew/donate through our website [www.bigtrees.org](http://www.bigtrees.org). Your membership/donation is tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

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