From CBTA’s President

By Paul Prescott

Spring is upon us. It won’t be long before the dogwoods bloom, the rest of the Park reopens and we swing into “high season.” Several weddings are already planned for June, which is to say that Jack Knight Hall is reserved already for every Saturday in June. The business is good for the Park, but it will require us to move our annual CBTA meeting to Sunday, June 26. More details will follow, but please mark your calendars now.

Several years ago the bylaws of CBTA were revised, which included term limits for Board members elected after that time. Part of our agenda on June 26 will include electing to the Board persons to replace the last two members who will have served more than six consecutive years on the Board.

Marcy Crawford was president of CBTA during the contract negotiations in 2010 with the Department of Parks and Recreation. (We do this every five years.) Having been through this process recently myself, it is an interesting trial. Marcy was president when ground was broken for the new Visitor Center. She, and later presidents and boards, felt obliged to make sure the contractors were building what they had promised to build. This kind of oversight was not always welcomed by some, but the result is appreciated by all who visit, volunteer or work here. Marcy was also president when the above-mentioned bylaws were revised. Recently, Marcy has been in charge of this newsletter. Marcy also chairs the nominating committee which is tasked with filling vacant Board positions. Finding her replacement will be challenging at best. Marcy is finishing her eighth year on the Board and is a wonderful example of grace and strength under severe trial.

Bunny Firebaugh will be finishing her sixteenth year on the CBTA Board. The simple fact that she has put up with fellow board members this long is testimony to her quiet strength, dedicated principles and endurance. (She would disagree, I suspect, and simply claim to be stubborn, but we know better.) Bunny has been the chair of the hospitality committee. If you’ve ever been treated or fed at a CBTA seminar, docent meeting or any event that had food or snacks, it was in whole or in part organized by Bunny. She is one of those effective leaders behind the scenes who doesn’t receive the credit she deserves. Her lasting work is Summer Sweetness. If you haven’t experienced this treat, drop by the Warming Hut any weekend this summer. You’ll be glad you did.

We will miss you, Marcy. We will miss you, Bunny. Best wishes for the next chapter in your lives.
Summer Sweetness!

*By Betty Watson*

Keep watching the Warming Hut. As warmer months approach it will be transformed into a summer oasis. Summer Sweetness will soon be here! Instead of a warm fire, visitors will discover delicious strawberry (with real strawberries), vanilla and chocolate ice cream and hot popcorn served on the porch of the Warming Hut. These treats will be scooped up from 12:00 to 4:00 every Saturday, Sunday and holidays, Memorial Day through Labor Day. Opening day is Saturday, May 28.

Our visitors to the Park are always so delighted to see Summer Sweetness after walking the beautiful North Grove Trail. Ice cream is $1.00 a scoop and popcorn is $1.00 a bag. And yes, we can scoop up triple scoops! This has become one of our most successful fundraising activities, and visitors have been very generous with their donations.

Volunteers are needed for the four-hour shift: two or three scoopers, a popcorn bagger and a cashier. Look for Summer Sweetness on Signup Genius and come join in the fun. It’s a great way to meet and greet our wonderful visitors to the Park and at the same time enjoy an ice cream treat under the canopy of the giant sequoias in the warm summer sunshine.

See you at Summer Sweetness!

---

Scholarship Opportunities Available

*By Sue Hoffmann*

CBTA is proud to be able to offer five $1000 academic scholarships this year to students who have chosen to pursue an education and/or career in environmentally related fields. The purpose of the scholarships is to provide a monetary award to five promising California upper division or graduate students, who have shown an educational and career commitment to the study of the environment and show a commitment to communicate and interpret a love of nature and an understanding of the need to practice conservation.

Students pursuing degrees in environmental protection, forestry, wildlife and fisheries biology, parks and recreation, park management, environmental law and public policy, environmental art and California history are encouraged to apply.

Dedication to the ideals of the scholarship will be considered at least as important as financial need in making the award.

The opportunity for CBTA to offer scholarships started with the Emily M. Hewitt Memorial Scholarship. The Hewitt family funds this scholarship to honor Emily M. Hewitt and to honor a student who shared her love of nature.

In addition to the Hewitt scholarship, CBTA is now able to also offer the Stephen K. Stocking Memorial Scholarship, as well as three CBTA scholarships.

Please visit our website [www.bigtrees.org](http://www.bigtrees.org) and then click on Events and Programs for application information. Applications must be postmarked by April 15. Please call the office at 209-795-1196 for more information.
Park Update

by Gary Olson

Spring has arrived, and visitors are flocking to the Park like swallows returning to their breeding grounds. The recent snow and rain have helped the forest spring back to life and even revived the Big Tree Creek in the North Grove with flowing water. While all of this weather is welcome, the drought conditions of the previous years have taken a toll on many of the trees in the area as more and more are beginning to die. We will be monitoring the die-off and removing hazard trees in public areas, but some of the dead trees will be left standing for wildlife habitat. The thinning project in the North Grove is continuing and we will be burning slash piles to clean the forest floor.

Ranger Robyn Mendoza is working with park aide Mara Naber to help oversee the volunteer and interpretive programs for the summer until we can fill the part-time interpreter position left empty by Wendy Harrison’s retirement. I anticipate we will hire more seasonal staff along with our two summer interns to keep the interpretive programs going for the summer. In addition, we will be working with the docents to continue and improve the summer programs. New docent training will take place April 2 and 9. These mandatory trainings for new docents will be six hours each, so bring a sack lunch. All docents are encouraged to attend the April 9 meeting.

Ranger Jeff Davis is on a temporary assignment at Columbia State Park for the summer. Our park maintenance supervisor position is still vacant. The maintenance staff is working hard to keep up with the maintenance issues. We will strive to provide quality services to the public, so please help by providing your observations to me so we can address any issues or concerns. We should have ranger coverage in the Park every day and should have evening coverage most days throughout the summer.

I look forward to another exciting spring and summer, full of friendly, happy visitors who appreciate everyone who helps and supports this wonderful Park. Be safe, enjoy the time with your family and friends, and let’s have fun out in the Park, sharing our love of nature and our passion to enhance our guest experiences.

Fourteenth Annual Welcome Back Brunch!

By Bunny Firebaugh

It is time for our 14th Annual Welcome Brunch for Docents and New Members in the Jack Knight Memorial Hall on April 16, 2016, at 11:00 a.m. CBTA will provide a delicious brunch for all the new members and docents. At this time you will have the opportunity to meet the rangers, Park staff, CBTA Board members and staff, new members and old friends. Also you will be able to find out about and sign up for all the programs that will be going on in the Park this year.

Please RSVP by April 10th to Bunny Firebaugh by email, lovetheforest@goldrush.com or by phone 209-795-4305.

Hope to see you all there!
Spring Seminars to Enjoy

by Vida Kenk

Please mark your calendars for the CBTA seminars. Once you pay the Park day use fee at the entrance kiosk, seminars are free and open to the public. Seminars are scheduled on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon in Jack Knight Hall. This beautiful and historic building was built by the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

May 21 - Where and when was the first CCC camp in a California State Park System established?* This and many other topics relating to the Civilian Conservation Corps will be the subject of this seminar. Sharon Giacomazzi will present “Roosevelt's Tree Army,” the enduring legacy of the CCC in National Forests. Sharon is the author of several historical hiking guides.

May 28 - Kathy Biggs will present “Dragonflies”. These beautiful adult insects that skim over our waterways spend the majority of their lives as aquatic larvae, familiar to those of you who have participated in the Creek Critters program at the Park. The talk will probably be followed by a short walk to look for dragonflies in the Park. Kathy is the author of California’s first dragonfly guide.

June 4 - Nancy Muleady-Mecham’s seminar “California’s Golden Geology” will explore the geology of California, with a special look at how the Mother Lode was formed and why it is where it is. Doc Nancy is a retired U.S. National Park ranger, who has authored popular books about her experiences, as well as being one of the authors of the revised edition of The Enduring Giants.

Sunday, May 22, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. - In addition to the seminar series, CBTA is sponsoring a special presentation by Jo Ellis, director of education outreach at the Bay Area Lyme Foundation. Lyme and other tickborne diseases are a growing problem in California. This talk will include how to protect yourself and what to do if bitten by a tick. This topic is especially appropriate for anyone who likes to walk in the woods and fields. Summer is coming! Please note that the date and time differ from our seminars.

Fall seminars are scheduled on September 3 (on Sierra Nevada ecosystems) and September 24 (on wolves). Details in the next CBTA Bulletin!

Most of this year’s seminars are the result of suggestions by people - like you - about topics and presenters they would like. Do you have a specific suggestion? If so, please contact me at vidakenk@comcast.net.

*The first CCC camp in the California State Park system was established at Calaveras Big Trees State Park in June 1933.

Summer Interns Arrive Soon!

by Mary Anne Carlton

Calaveras Big Trees State Park will once again have two Student Conservation Association summer interns. Robyn Mendoza and I spent three rather intense days at the end of January interviewing many eager candidates. In the end, we selected two young women from the East coast.

Erika Schaubach is from Virginia Beach, Virginia, and will be graduating this May from Old Dominion University with a degree in English. She comes to us with lots of experience working with children and volunteering and working in a variety of Virginia’s state parks.

Deena Lucas, originally from the suburbs of Baltimore, Maryland, has been in New York for several years. She attended State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry and is currently working at a nature center as a naturalist.

Robyn and I were impressed by Erika and Deena. Their enthusiasm, experience and confidence helped them rise to the top of the list. We look forward to meeting them and working with them. They are also looking forward to the summer to gain some valuable work experience and to having some fun in California.
California Naturalist Program

By Dexter Hardcastle

The California Naturalist Program has come to Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

California Big Trees Association has partnered with the State Department of Parks and Recreation and with the University of California to provide the California Naturalist Program at Big Trees. Our first class was offered last fall, and we had 17 students, seven of whom were docents at CBT. The others came from as far away as the Bay Area. Thus far, three have completed all the requirements and are now certified California Naturalists.

The University of California developed the program to introduce Californians to the wonders of our unique ecology and to engage volunteers in stewardship and study of California’s natural communities. The California Naturalist Program uses a science curriculum with emphasis on hands-on learning, problem-solving and community service to instill a deep appreciation for the natural ecosystems of our state.

Participants complete forty hours of combined classroom and field training, perform forty hours of volunteer involvement and develop and complete a capstone project. Class content includes basic ecology, watershed concepts, air quality, energy resources, land use, geology, wildlife and interpretation.

Upon completion of all course requirements, participants receive a certificate of completion from the University of California and are certified California Naturalists.

Speaking for myself, I found the program to be an enjoyable, yet intense, learning experience that I highly recommend for anyone interested in better understanding the uniqueness of our ecosystem and who wants to share this with others.

The classroom learning experiences were filled with providing new knowledge, however I think most enjoyment came during our field trips and outside activities! On one trip we were turning over fallen trees looking for salamanders and other amphibians when we came upon a huge group of lady beetles preparing themselves for the winter. What a beautiful sight! During our water unit we measured river clarity, speed and bank slope integrity. While on the geology field trip to Alpine Lake we stopped at the site of the Sawgrass mudslide of 1997 to view geologic strata only to discover approximately twenty young sequoias on either side of the highway. How gorgeous they are! We took core samples from ponderosa pines, counted the tree rings and then measured the height of the trees. But the most peaceful experiences came when we sat quietly under a tree or on the bank of the river and listened to the sounds and viewed our surroundings, often drawing what we saw and recording what we heard.

We are pleased to announce that another class will be held in June 2017 at Calaveras Big Trees. The instructors will be Wendy Harrison, retired California State interpreter, and Dexter Hardcastle, certified California Naturalist and docent. If you want more information regarding this program, contact Dexter at the Visitor Center phone number—209-795-1196—or visit the California Naturalist Program web page at calnat.ucanr.edu.

Welcome to New Members!

October 27, 2015 – March 15, 2016

Barbara Berg, Rancho Cordova, California
David and Karen Furst, Livermore, California
John Krutsinger, Murphys, California
Victoria Thomas, Sacramento, California
William and Laurie Kraljev, Lodi, California
Jason Smith, Phoenix, Arizona
Advisory Council Plans for Future

By Marcy Crawford

The Calaveras Big Trees Advisory Council and the CBTA Board held their first meeting of 2016 on March 5. Gary Olson, Park Superintendent, was a guest at the meeting. Gary gave an update on Park improvements, including the Three Senses Trail rehabilitation and upgrade. He explained that the Department of Parks and Recreation, Calaveras Big Trees Association and the Arnold Lions Club have agreed to partner in this project. (See Rod Smith’s bulletin article on this topic).

Advisory Council member Bob Doten, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the smart phone application presently in the development stage. When completed the app will have links to the North Grove Trail Guide, the State Park website, the CBTA website and to businesses along the Highway 4 corridor. Users will be able to purchase and download this app at home for use at the Park.

Council member Gail Kautz suggested a “Family Day” for legislators during the last week in July or the first week in August when the legislature is not in session. She suggested we invite them to bring their families for an informal day that will include a tour of the North Grove and a barbecue. Gail wants the legislators to learn about the Park by inviting them to see it firsthand. Gail agreed to chair the event, and Sanders Lamont, Bob Doten and Marcy Crawford volunteered to serve on her committee.

The next meeting will be scheduled for late June or early July.

Three Senses Trail to Get Upgrade

By Rod Smith

The Three Senses Trail in the North Grove is about to get a makeover! The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), Calaveras Big Trees Association (CBTA) and the Arnold Lions Club have agreed to partner in a project to rehabilitate and upgrade the trail. The Lions and CBTA will be reaching out to the community to support this project.

The Three-Senses Trail was developed in 1976 by CBTA to provide visually-impaired visitors the opportunity to experience the natural environment of the Park through the senses of touch, hearing and smell. At that time it was a groundbreaking venture as an outreach to the disabled community. It also became an outdoor educational and interpretive facility. The trail is 600 feet long with thirteen stations with interpretative signs in Braille as well as printed English.

All three organizations are excited about the new project. Using new technology and materials we will build and expand on the original purpose of the trail. The first thing we will do is invite people with all types of disabilities to experience the trail and offer their thoughts about how we can make the trail more relevant to their needs. By focusing on the senses we can use the trail so that people without disabilities may also experience the Park more fully.

We would like to make this trail a showcase outdoor educational and interpretive "classroom" that may be emulated by other parks to develop their own outreach programs to the disabled.

Arnold Lions will take the lead in the fundraising. The Lions and the Park will work closely together in the design of the trail and the exhibits. We will seek input from various individuals and organizations with expertise related to all of the disabilities. The trail design must meet the specifications of the DPR and must go through the design review process of the DPR.

Why should the Lions, CBTA and DPR be partnering on this project? Lions Club International (LCI) will be celebrating its centennial in 2017. To commemorate the anniversary LCI is encouraging participation in projects that address youth, vision, hunger and the environment. This project has captured the imagination of the district Lions, who have adopted this project as a centennial challenge project and will be supporting it as well. The DPR has also set an objective to reach out to the underserved, particularly the sensory impaired. CBTA originally funded the creation of the trail and supports educational work of the Park. The partnership will meet the objectives of all three organizations.

The preliminary estimate for the project is $200,000. The design has started. Construction will start in 2017 and should be completed in the summer of 2017. One goal is to have a commissioning event in 2017. This will be an event that will generate great publicity for the DPR and LCI, in general, and Calaveras Big Trees State Park, CBTA and Arnold Lions, in particular.
Winter Wonderland Carnival 2015

By Bunny Firebaugh

Winter Wonderland was a very successful day thanks to all the wonderful volunteers and perfect weather. The day was cold and clear. The roads well sanded so the horses didn’t slip—always a big worry. Visitors enjoyed the fire, hot beverages and cookies in Jack Knight Hall.

Bill Minkel was in the Big Tree Meadow playing his alpenhorn to the surprise of the wagon riders. Interpreters on the wagons shared information on the Park and meadow. Folks enjoyed guided walks on snowshoes along the North Grove trail.

In Jack Knight Hall our volunteers cheered on our guests as they played snowman toss and elf toss and had the chance to win prizes. Smiling kids left the cake walk with a prize cupcake. Visitors made bird feeders by spreading shortening on cardboard forms and tubes then sprinkling them with bird seed. Children made paper snowmen covered with shredded paper. Face painting was also a big hit.

Mark your calendar for December 28, 2016, for our next Winter Wonderland.

Photos by Claudia Beymer

Memorials

Brad Millar
John Budd
The Board meets monthly the last Wednesday at 1:00 p.m., and the meeting is open to the public. Please call the office at 795-1196 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 or renew/donate through our website www.bigtrees.org. Your membership/donation is tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.