From CBTA’s President: Reflections on My New Role

By Rod Smith

The Annual Calaveras Big Trees Association general meeting in June was momentous for me. I took a deep breath and stepped into my new role, hoping to continue the great work of past CBTA presidents: Paul Prescott most recently and Vida Kenk before that. Paul and Vida have served the park with passion and dedication, and I know they’ll nudge me in the right direction whenever I need it.

Also at the general meeting we were delighted to greet Mel Bradley and his wife Barbara. What a charming couple! Mel told stories from the creation of the Bradley Grove and how he spent boyhood summers dragging buckets of water from the creek up to the newly planted trees. Mel’s family began their lifetime love of the Big Trees in 1947. After just one visit, Owen and Adrienne Bradley began the long campaign to save the South Grove and fold it into Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

My connection with the Calaveras Big Trees State Park goes back only to 2008. Like everyone who encounters the Big Trees, however, I grew attached to the park immediately. Yes, we “Walk in Awe Among Giants”. As I listen and read about the service of those who have cherished these giants – volunteers and park employees alike – I am in awe of that service. This park would not exist without the intense commitment by many people over the decades.

With the opening of the Visitor Center two years ago, our association launched a new effort to support the park. CBTA now spins off over $100,000 per year to support educational and interpretive work at Big Trees. I see the results of this focus every day in the faces of our delighted visitors.

In April of this year, several CBTA board members attended a Partnership Training workshop given by the Partnering Office of the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). As you may know, DPR has been working on a transformation for the last three years. Exciting changes are coming, and we’ll be sure to keep you informed!

I came away from the workshop recognizing the uniqueness of Calaveras Big Trees State Park and how it is truly the crown jewel of the State Park system.

I look forward to working with the board, docents and staff as we face the challenges and opportunities ahead.
Reviving the Three Senses Trail at Calaveras Big Trees State Park

By Rod Smith

Forests are for everyone, and our Three Senses Trail was built back in 1976 as a special place for disabled visitors. This trail encourages all visitors to experience the forest via smell, touch and sound. It became known as the “braille trail,” because this was the best technology at the time for the visually impaired.

Our 40-year-old trail is in sad need of revival, but we have great news! The Arnold Lions Club is sponsoring a project to rebuild and upgrade the Three Senses Trail and make the forest experience more meaningful for everyone.

Fundraising is underway – and you can help!

The full cost of the project is estimated at $225,000. A matching fund grant of $97,000 has already been awarded by the Lions Clubs International Foundation. The Calaveras Community Foundation (CCF) awarded a grant of $9,836 to be used specifically for the touching garden. The CCF is also providing administrative assistance. Also supporting the effort are the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), Calaveras Big Trees Association and Lions District 4-A1. Want to help? For information, please contact Rod Smith at: rodchsmith@hotmail.com.

It’s a big, exciting project.

DPR is reaching out to all visitors, including the disabled and disadvantaged, and this project will enhance the experience for everyone. The plan includes:

- New access trail from the main park trail, and new connection to the creek overlook.
- Rebuilt trail meeting all ADA standards.
- New benches where visitors can sit and listen to the sounds of the forest.
- Twenty sensory stations where visitors can experience the sounds, feel the plants and trees and smell the rich aromas of the forest.
- All sensory stations will include braille descriptions plus audio presentations using phone or tablet apps.
- New “touching garden” where visitors can feel and smell the different plants of the forest.

Photo by Claudia Beymer

By Rod Smith

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Park Update
By Steven Walloupe

Thank you all for the warm welcome. My name is Steven Walloupe, and I am a supervising ranger with California State Parks. Since my transfer to Calaveras Big Trees State Park in early March, I’ve been building a full understanding of park operations and determining where to focus my energy to keep the park running and the public happy. I am slowly remembering people’s names and putting names with faces.

First impressions matter a lot, and from my first day at the park, I could see that we are blessed with a very dedicated team of staff and volunteers. It would be impossible to operate this park without all of you.

It’s been an interesting year weather-wise. The falling of the Pioneer Cabin tree generated a lot of interest, and we’ve intensified our focus on public safety mainly due to high, fast and cold water flows in the Stanislaus River.

Considering the numbers of visitors that we’ve had here, it’s been a safe summer so far. We’ve had a few medical aid calls, some dog incidents and a slight uptick in bear-related incidents. Overall though, it has been a good summer season, and the park is in good shape.

When we are fully staffed, our park will consist of three park rangers, one state park interpreter and me, along with seasonal staff in the Visitor Center and kiosk, interpreters, camp hosts and volunteers. Three key positions are not filled right now, but we will be interviewing for the interpreter position in August. One park ranger will be joining the staff as soon as he completes his field training program. Things are looking up, but we still have some time before all positions are filled. It’s always challenging to be short-staffed, but we are moving through the summer in good fashion.

I would like to thank the entire staff and volunteers for their efforts and hard work. This is a well-loved park with a high level of visitation. Without everyone involved and the efforts that you all put in, we would not be able to present this place to the public in such an outstanding manner.

A Day in the Park—A Special Event

Calaveras Big Trees Association Presents A Day in the Park on Saturday, August 19, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Bring your family and friends to a fun-filled afternoon of music by the Magnolia Rhythm Trio. Delicious barbeque will be available prepared by Big Boys Barbecue. Columbia State Park reenactors will be on hand to share everyday life in the 1870s. The Columbia State Park rangers and docents will also be sharing old-time games from the 1800s. This event will be held near the campfire circle and Jack Knight Hall. Come join the fun!
Meet Our Summer Interns

Summer at the park is spectacular, vibrant and humming with activities. Just when we need them most, our high-energy summer interns have arrived! We are thrilled to introduce Ben Foster and Alex Conrad.

Alex comes to us from the University of Massachusetts Amherst where she recently graduated with two degrees: a B.S. in biology and B.A. in gender studies. Her solid science background and desire to make connections makes her a perfect fit for the park. She’s also an accomplished a capella singer and a dancer.

Ben is from the University of Indiana. He’ll be a senior in the fall, majoring in outdoor recreation, parks and human ecology. Ben is an Eagle Scout with lots of experience working with kids. Ask him about his passions: hiking, sailing and playing guitar!

When you come to the park, you’ll find Alex and Ben at our campfire programs, leading sing-alongs and immersing our campers in the world of bats or big cats or fire. You’ll find them leading walks through the North Grove, and mentoring children in our Cubs and Junior Ranger programs.

Our interns gain tremendous experience while bringing fresh ideas and unique gifts to share with our visitors. It’s exciting to watch the knowledge sharing going in all directions – with interns, park staff, docents and visitors all learning and teaching one another. At the end of the summer, our interns move off to new adventures but remain ambassadors for Big Trees, spreading the word about our lovely park throughout the country.

Our intern program is a perfect example of partnerships.

- The interns are paid for through two separate funds that were set up by generous donors in honor of loved ones. Our non-profit association, Calaveras Big Trees Association, supplements additional expenses not covered by the funds, including uniforms; interviews and selects the final candidates; ensures that their housing is clean and well-furnished; and provides incidentals as needed.

- The State Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) provides our interns with living quarters, and DPR employees train and supervise them.

- The Student Conservation Association (SCA), a national non-profit organization, recruits intern candidates and handles all the administrative details. SCA provides intern stipends, living allowances and travel costs from the funds CBTA pays to SCA.

When you shop in the Visitor Center, join CBTA or attend an event at the park, you help us raise the funds for this important program. Thank you!

Upcoming EVENTS

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
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<td>August 19</td>
<td>Day in the Park: Magnolia Rhythm Trio will perform and Big Boys BBQ'IN will be selling their fabulous food.</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 28</td>
<td>Fall Seminar: Supervising Ranger Steven Walloupe will present a program on MiWuk and Native American culture.</td>
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Promoting Environmental Stewardship through Scholarship

By Sanders LaMont

Every year Calaveras Big Trees Association awards $1,500 scholarships to five outstanding people who are pursuing education with a focus on the natural environment. We look for students with a strong academic background, commitment to educate the public on environmental stewardship and work experience in their field. CBTA is honored to help these young people achieve their dreams of building a better world.

Our scholarship program began when the family of Emily Hewitt created an endowment for the Emily M. Hewitt Memorial Scholarship. The friends and family of Steve Stocking expanded the program, and the board of CBTA supports three additional scholars.

We reviewed 40 applications this year and selected these five. Each has a remarkable story.

Alexandra Cooper, our Emily Hewitt Scholar, is determined to teach and “share my love of nature with people around me and show them the different organisms in the world.” Teaching and organizing on environmental issues have been integral to her life for years now, and she’s taken on projects to eliminate invasive species, promote recycling, clean up parks and raise money for environmental causes. During her graduate work in biology at San Francisco State University, Alexandra has taught non-science students and tackled multiple research projects ranging from relationships in elephant families, to bighorn sheep analysis to the workings of the Biosphere Project.

Holly Gamblin, our Steve Stocking Scholar, is a recent graduate in wildlife conservation at Humboldt State University. Carnivore biology is her passion, and she was not deterred when she was told early in college that it wasn’t possible to study carnivores. Holly worked at six research assistance jobs while supporting herself through college and will pursue graduate studies in wildlife biology and carnivore ecology at Humboldt.

Erika Delemarre, a CBTA Scholar, left a career in public relations to work and volunteer for marine conservation and environmental education projects around the world. For four years, she worked and studied in Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Erika will begin graduate work marine biodiversity and conservation at Scripps Institute at UC San Diego, one of the best oceanography schools in the world. Her goal is to create lasting change on a global scale.

Nicole Young, a CBTA Scholar, is pursuing a master’s degree in environmental management at the University of San Francisco. She spent several years in Latin America working for a wide range of environmental organizations, often as a volunteer, using her language and scientific skills. She is currently employed as an environmental scientist working in Hawaii. When she completes her graduate work she wants to help create a sustainable planet.

Claire Bortot, a CBTA Scholar, is a senior at Humboldt State University majoring in wildlife management and conservation. After graduation she plans to educate the public about the appropriate treatment of animals in today’s world by working in a wildlife sanctuary, studying abroad to learn more about elephants and becoming a park ranger.

The five scholarships winners selected annually by CBTA share several common characteristics: a strong academic background; commitment to educate the public on environmental stewardship and work experience in their environmentally-related field.
New CBTA Board Members

At the June Annual Meeting CBTA members voted in two new board members and gratefully extended the terms of two existing board members. Here is our current board roster:

- Rod Smith, President
- Paul Prescott, Vice President
- Sanders LaMont, Vice President
- Nancy Gardner, Treasurer
- Joan Allday, Secretary
- Betty Watson, Director
- Betty Chase, Director
- Zoe Chiaramonte, Director

With great appreciation, we want to honor the many contributions of four former members who have now left the board. For everything you have done over the years, we thank Vida Kenk, Dexter Hardcastle, George Leong and Sally Williams.

Sharing the News  

By Betty Chase

Our fabulous new website has been up for several months now, so be sure to check it out at bigtrees.org. CBTA administrator Sue Hoffman has been busy posting articles and schedules of park activities so that we can all stay up to date. Take a look at a new series called 2017 CBT Docent Spotlights written by intern Alex Conrad!

Our social media efforts are also ramping up, and Facebook and Instagram are great ways to see what’s happening at the park. We are posting updates and photos several times per week, so be sure to “like” us. From Facebook, search on “Calaveras Big Trees Association.” From Instagram, search on “calaverasbigtrees.”

Do you have a story or photo to share? Social media needs to be social, so we would love your participation! We’re always looking for photos and stories of your days at Big Trees: camping trips, family reunions, weddings, hikes or funny moments. (We are careful about permissions though, and can’t use any photo without approval by the people who appear there.)

If you have an interesting question, we’ll ask a naturalist and try to get the answer!

To share your thoughts or photos, just use Facebook and send a message to Calaveras Big Trees Association. If you’d rather use email, you can reach me at bettyE-chase@comcast.net.

Congratulations, Naturalists!

Calaveras Big Trees State Park has long been a place where people can learn about the wonders of our natural environment. It was a perfect fit, therefore, to bring the California Naturalist Program to Big Trees.

During the month of June 2017, 25 students completed the California Naturalist Course at Calaveras Big Trees State Park. These industrious students completed forty hours of class, immersing themselves in the geology, hydrology, wildlife, forests, climate and ecology of California, with a focus on the Sierra Nevada. They deepened their learning with readings, hands-on activities and field trips throughout the park.

In addition to the science curriculum, the students completed a team citizen science project, honed their observation skills using the iNaturalist app and submitted individual capstone projects.

Wendy Harrison and Dexter Hardcastle led the course, bringing in professors and experts for each content area. CBTA was a key sponsor of this program, working in partnership with the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

The graduates are now part of a larger, growing community of California Naturalists who continue to learn about and protect our unique and precious natural resources and public lands. Volunteerism is a key focus of all California Naturalists, and the new graduates will be sharing their passion for nature at Big Trees and throughout California.

CBTA hopes to sponsor classes of California Naturalists every two years, so the next class is anticipated to return in 2019. If you want more information about the California Naturalist program, and where else you might take a class, please visit: calnat.ucanr.edu.
A Memorable Day at Creek Critters

By Jim Allday

She arrived at the creek with two sons with disabilities. One was severely disabled and was strapped into a wheel chair, requiring her full attention. The other boy had come for the Creek Critters program. His body was somewhat bent over, and he had difficulty walking. His limbs were contracted indicating a form of cerebral palsy. He was taller and older than the other kids at the creek that day.

In my short introductory talk, I let everyone know that we'd be searching for aquatic insects in the creek and learning about the creatures we discover. He was very engaged and very politely asked a few questions with a slight speech impediment.

Before we waded into the creek to look for critters, I asked each child to find a partner. Being disabled and different, no one turned to him and he did not end up with a partner. He struggled to walk the few feet to the creek, but he was unstable and couldn't bend over to lift rocks from the creek bottom.

One of our other docents immediately “adopted” him, becoming his Creek Critter partner. He captured quite a few critters and learned to identify caddis flies, mayflies and stone flies. He brought his critters up to the picnic table and dumped them into the share tubs for everyone to see. He proudly pointed out his critters and explained to the other kids what type they were. Right away, other kids were coming to him asking him to help identify their critters.

In one short hour at Creek Critters, the change in him was remarkable. He became animated as he chatted with everyone. His face glowed with pride and accomplishment, and we all felt that this had been a memorable day in his young life. It was just as memorable for us, and we felt so privileged to have met him.

This is why we volunteer.
CBTA Board of Directors:
Rod Smith  
Paul Prescott  
Sanders LaMont  
Joan Allday  
Nancy Gardener  
Betty Watson  
Betty Chase  
Zoe Chiaramonte

President  
Vice President  
Vice President  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
Director  
Director  
Director

Big Tree Bulletin:
Betty Chase  
Claudia Beymer  
Sue Hoffmann

Communications Chair  
Editor  
Circulation/Mailing

CBTA Staff:
Jill Ogburn  
Sue Hoffmann  
Debbie McGee  
Karen Gill  
Kat Ramberg

Retail Manager  
Administrative Officer  
Bookkeeper  
Retail Assistant  
Retail Assistant

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 209-795-1196 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.

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