President’s Message

By Rod Smith

Walking in Awe Among Giants. That’s the motto of our organization, and it explains exactly how I feel when I move through the park. I’m in awe of the park’s natural beauty, immersed in wonder, reverence, amazement, and peace.

I also walk in awe of the leaders who came before us. Their connections to our park were undeniable. The final rite of passage of one CBTA president was held in Jack Knight Hall. The ashes of another are sprinkled along the Three Senses Trail. Generations of leaders have committed their hearts and resources to protecting and preserving the Calaveras Big Trees.

Since you are a member, I know you share this same love of the park. In rain, snow, or blazing sun, I hope it’s always a sanctuary.

I think a lot about the future of our park, and how to build the next generation of members and leaders. How do we invite people to connect with nature and the giant sequoias? How do we inspire them to become members and frequent visitors?

Communications are key, and we’re working on making improvements. We want to have more frequent and more effective communication through digital media. I welcome your thoughts, and you can always reach me at rodchsmith@hotmail.com.
A Check for $74,000

Work on the Three Senses Trail is About to Begin

By Rod Smith

What a privilege! What an honor! On February 21, I presented a check for $74,000 to park maintenance supervisor Brian Robertson. With this step, the park can kick off the administrative work required to fully rebuild the Three Senses Trail.

Think of this check as a down payment because, overall, we’ve raised nearly $200,000 to complete the trail.

Fundraising was a community effort: With a charitable focus on assisting the blind, Lions Clubs have been key supporters. Almost half of the money came from the Lions Clubs International Foundation and another quarter came from the local Lions Club and other clubs in the San Joaquin District. The Calaveras Community Foundation and Sierra Pacific Industries have been major contributors, and individuals have made contributions ranging $25 to $10,000.

Construction will be a community effort too: The California Conservation Corps will begin trail construction in late March or early April, but the community is pitching in as well. Under the supervision of park staff, energetic park docents and the Ebbetts Pass Fire District will be providing some volunteer labor.

The trail’s place in park history: Completed in 1976, the Three Senses Trail was the very first project adopted by the newly formed Calaveras Big Trees Association. Over the years, it has been widely recognized as a special place to experience the forest via smell, touch, and sound. It’s been a magnet for blind and disabled visitors, such as students from the Self Reliance Institute in Sacramento.

The Three Senses Trail has been well used and well loved for 40 years, and I’m immensely grateful for the support we’ve received from Lions Clubs, the community, and the Department of Parks and Recreation.

With construction due to start soon, and commissioning expected in the fall, the next few months will be busy and exciting. Thank you all for your support of this important work.
2018 Second Annual Dogwood Festival
Saturday May 19, 2018

Enjoy this rare opportunity to hear the amazing music of Symphony of the Sierra, a local orchestra directed by Mic Harper. Rustic Jack Knight Hall will be the setting of this event to celebrate the season of the dogwoods.

Enjoy music, hors d’oeuvres, and Locke Vineyards wine tasting. Quyle Kiln will be on hand selling some of their beautiful dogwood ceramic pieces.

In addition there will be a private "Walk Among the Dogwoods" for ticket holders to begin at 12:30 from the campfire area.

Tickets: $25 (includes entrance into the park if bought online) Buy tickets online at bigtrees.org. If any tickets are available at the door, the cost will be $25 plus the park entrance fee. Call the CBTA office at 209-795-1196 for assistance.

This event is a fundraiser for Calaveras Big Trees Association. All proceeds will be used to help fulfill our mission to support the delivery of high quality educational and interpretive programs for Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

Spring Seminars
By Sanders LaMont

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<th>May 5 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon</th>
<th>Photography in Big Trees Seminar</th>
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<tr>
<td>Education Building (across from the Visitor Center)</td>
<td>Claudia and Alan Beymer are masters with a camera and will share their expertise in this free seminar. You’ve already seen their beautiful work if you’ve ever checked out the Facebook page of Calaveras Big Trees Association or purchased a Big Trees calendar.</td>
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<th>June 2 9:00 a.m. – 8:30 p.m.</th>
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<td>Here is your chance to immerse yourself in the natural history of the Sierra Nevada at Calaveras Big Trees State Park. Join Doc Nancy for a day o in-depth nature exploration. Attendees will participate in presentations, walks, demonstrations and will learn interpretive techniques. All walks are classified as “easy” with the longest being a 1.5 mile stroll around the North Grove. The program is free to all and is sponsored by the Calaveras Big Trees Association. Please RSVP at 209-795-1196 if you can, or simply show up for the full day or just the portions of most interest. The schedule for the day has been posted to the Calaveras Big Trees Association website: <a href="https://bigtrees.org/event/nature-blitz/">https://bigtrees.org/event/nature-blitz/</a></td>
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Nancy Muleady-Mecham, Ph.D. is a Fulbright Scholar and retired National Park ranger. Don’t miss this unique opportunity to learn about this very special place.
Scholarship Opportunities for Students of the Environment

Every year Calaveras Big Trees Association awards $1,500 scholarships to five outstanding students who are pursuing an education with a focus on the natural environment. We look for people 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.

We encourage you – or someone you know – to apply by April 15. 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 all eligible.

Our scholarship program started with the Emily M. Hewitt Memorial Scholarship, because the Hewitt family funds this scholarship to honor Emily and students who share her love of nature. Additionally, we offer the Stephen K. Stocking Memorial Scholarship and three CBTA scholarships.

For application information, please visit our website at https://www.bigtrees.org, click About CBTA then Scholarships. If you have questions, please call the office at 209-795-1196.

Wanted! New Docents at Calaveras Big Trees State Park
By Mara Naber

Volunteer opportunities abound at Calaveras Big Trees State Park. We are looking for people who love the park, love the out of doors, love nature, and love to work with people.

At Calaveras Big Trees, we have a great community of people who are dedicated to enhancing every visitor’s experience. Docents help to maintain the trails, conduct guided walks, work in the visitor center, assist with park events and fundraisers, and work with young people in our many children’s programs. There is something for everyone.

Park docents are constantly learning, because you’ll be trained in whatever volunteer area you choose. As a docent, you’ll be invited to our regular docent meetings and seminars that are scheduled throughout the year. Plus, you can use our fabulous docent library.

Interested?
1. You can start the process by contacting Mara.Naber@parks.ca.gov or calling 209-795-7980 to express your interest.
2. After filling out an application, you’ll have a phone interview, so folks at the park can learn a bit more about you.
3. You’ll need to attend an orientation session on March 31 or April 7, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the park.
4. Lastly, be sure to come to the Welcome Open House for new and returning docents on April 12, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the park.

Be a Part of Our History Project
By Joan Allday

If you were here at the park in the 40s, 50s, 60s, or 70s, we’d love to hear your stories and see precious photos from the olden days. Our newly formed History Group has been busy interviewing people with long-standing connections to the park and documenting the park’s rich past.

We can’t wait to share the results of our research, because we’ll be making it available via seminars, the park library, and perhaps a video.

Just recently, we interviewed retired state park employees Wayne and Wendy Harrison who lived and worked at Calaveras Big Trees State Park for 30 years. From Wayne, we heard new stories about prescribed burns in the park, and Wendy shared her experiences with the many intriguing people who served as park docents, interns, and teachers. Wayne and Wendy met and married while working at the park and celebrated their wedding at their favorite spot in the park—Beaver Creek. Years later, when they were expecting their daughter Katie, park docents gathered again to throw a fabulous baby shower. It was clear how much the docents loved and admired Wendy – and vice versa.

Please contact Joan Allday if you – or someone you know – would like to share experiences from years gone by: 209-890-3062 or Daffodils9@comcast.net.
Too Many Trees....
*By Betty Chase*

“The dense forests we know today are not normal,” says Susie Kocher of the University of California Cooperative Extension. Kocher came to the park in March to lead a seminar on what’s happening in our forests.

Just look at the two photos taken of Spaulding Lake in Nevada County in 1919 and 1993. (Source: Gruel 2001) In 74 years, the number of trees increased wildly.

![Two photos of Spaulding Lake](image)

What changed during those years was fire suppression.

Over thousands of years, the forests of the Sierra Nevada adapted to live and thrive with frequent, low-severity fires. Native Americans actively managed the forests by burning them. Burning the forests meant: more oak trees and more acorns; fewer trees, that were widely spaced and easy to travel through; more new shrubs with young flexible shoots suitable for basket weaving; and fewer insects overall. What was good for the Native Americans was also good for the forests.

As settlers pushed out the Native Americans, fire prevention became the priority, and fires were controlled as quickly as possible.

By suppressing fires, forest density leapt from roughly 30 trees per acre to more than 200 or 300 trees per acre. Crowded, unhealthy forests have brought serious ecological consequences. More trees have meant:

- Increased stress due to water competition
- Decreased ability to survive extended periods of drought
- Decreased ability to fight off bark beetles
- Fewer shrub habitats
- Huge build up in forest fuels
- Increase in high-severity fires in which most of the trees are killed

In short, a thinner forest is a healthier, more fire-resistant forest.

So, what’s the answer? Foresters agree that we must imitate the historical fire regime by thinning/harvesting trees, using prescribed burns and managed wildfire in remote areas that are far from people and dwellings (also known as “let it burn”).

Over time, you might see staff at Calaveras Big Tree State Park practicing these techniques to reduce forest crowding and increase the health of our forest.

If you like learning about our natural environment, be sure to watch for upcoming seminars and other events at Calaveras Big Trees State Park. Just head to [https://bigtrees.org](https://bigtrees.org) for information.
Your Membership Makes a Difference!

Did you know….?  
Calaveras Big Trees State Park exists today because passionate, committed people just like you raised the money, purchased the land, and donated it to the state. The campaign to save the Big Trees took 50 years, but private citizens made it happen.

That tradition of service continues, and our association accomplished great things in 2017 thanks to our membership dues, donations, fundraising, and retail sales:

- We continue to raise funds for future park renovations, including a new campfire center.
- We paid for seasonal park aides and interns and supported park volunteers who presented countless programs and educational opportunities to delight our visitors throughout the year – guided walks, snowshoe walks, campfire programs, Cubs, Junior Rangers, Creek Critters, school tours, photography walks, crafts, the Warming Hut, and more.
- We operated the Visitor Center and organized outreach events like A Day in the Park, seminars, and workshops.
- We promoted environmental stewardship by awarding $1,500 scholarships to five college students who have chosen to pursue careers that focus on the natural environment.

If you haven’t already, please join us or renew your membership today, and help us continue our tradition of service! You can become a member online at https://bigtrees.org. There’s a membership category for everyone.

With your help, we can provide great programs and events that create wonderful experiences for thousands of visitors, build public support, and preserve the legacy of Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

Thank You for Joining!

Here are new members who have joined in just the past few months. Thank you for making an investment in our park!

Robert Eicher, Elk Grove CA  
Raelene Nunn, El Dorado Hills CA

Joe and Joan Cembrola, Pensacola, FL  
Ana Schlaht, Arnold CA

Ruth Klingbeil, Little Rock AR  
Independence Hall Quilters, Arnold CA

Scott Robinson & Family, Alameda, CA  
Jon Menard, Sunnyvale CA

Sean and Lisa Leggett, Lodi CA  
MaryAnne Carlson, Stockton CA

Robert Giusti, Livermore CA  
Karl Ruddy, Albany CA

Nancy Dommes, Alamo CA  
Kera Cowley, Cupertino CA

Rick and Julianne Martyn, Sonora CA
The Warming Hut Warms Hearts at the Park

By Jim Allday

The Warming Hut is always a big hit with our visitors – particularly after the big snows that began in March. Countless families have told us how much they appreciate gathering around a roaring fire and sipping hot drinks after trekking along the North Grove Trail on a cold, blustery, winter day.

A steadfast team of volunteers staff the Warming Hut. We never charge for hot drinks, but we happily accept donations. On an average year, the Warming Hut generates $2,000-$3,000 in donations that we invest right back into the park.

Volunteering in the Warming Hut can be a blast, and sometimes, you never sit still. Over the busy Presidents’ Day weekend, volunteers Jim and Sallie Bearden and Julie Shelby served hot drinks to 864 visitors in just four hours! That’s over 200 servings of hot cocoa or hot cider per hour or three servings per minute. It’s hard work, but it’s still a hoot – particularly if you don’t mind chatting with visitors while being coated with brown powder!

On quiet weekends, there’s time for in-depth conversations with visitors from around the world. One cold, miserable day a few years back, Joan and I were working the Warming Hut when two men came in, both in their sixties. As they sat by the fire, we got to talking. The two men were brothers but had met each other for the very first time the previous weekend. For the next 1½ hours, they told their life stories. Their family had fled Nazi Germany and the infant brother was somehow lost going through immigration in Venezuela. On her deathbed, the mother told the story of the missing brother, and the family set out to find him. A truly memorable day at the park!

It’s always heartwarming to serve park visitors, and perhaps next year, you’ll be volunteering there, swapping stories, and sharing our love of the Big Trees.

April Flowers

By Claudia Beymer

If you are strolling around the meadow in April, look for the amazing snow plant. Its scientific name Sarcodes sanguinea means bloody flesh-like thing, not a very appealing moniker for this startlingly red bloom. Snow plant is red because it makes no chlorophyll; it is mycotrophic, relying on fungi of conifers for nutrition. That’s why you’ll find them near the base of pine trees in shady areas, poking through pine needles and forest litter and sometimes snow. The flowers on the stalk are closely packed, each one with five petals forming a bell shape.

Snow plants are fairly rare and are found only in California, Oregon, and Nevada. If you find a snow plant in the park or elsewhere, please leave them undisturbed for others to enjoy. (Source: US Forest Service)
CBTA Board of Directors:
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Paul Prescott  Vice President
Sanders LaMont  Vice President
Joan Allday  Secretary
Nancy Gardener  Treasurer
Betty Watson  Director
Betty Chase  Director
Zoe Chiaramonte  Director

Big Tree Bulletin:
Betty Chase  Editor
Claudia Beymer  Layout
Sue Hoffmann  Circulation/Mailing

CBTA Staff:
Jill Ogburn  Retail Manager
Sue Hoffmann  Administrative Officer
Debbie McGee  Bookkeeper
Mary Peterson  Assistant Retail Manager
Cassandra Jeffers  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 re-new 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.

Visit us…………
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