



MOONLETTER

Valley of the Moon Natural History Association Winter 2005

Save the Date!

DECEMBER 7 DECORATE

House of Happy Walls
10-12

DECEMBER 10

Start out the day with a hike with Dave and Bill, then come to the Christmas Party!

HIKE:

Sonoma Ridge Trail
9:45 am upper parking lot
JLSHP

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY:

House of Happy Walls
6-8 pm

Bring an appetizer
Or dessert

DECEMBER 14

Les Schumacher
Retirement Gathering
jlarroque@parks.ca.gov
For info and RSVP

JANUARY 15

Hidden Treasures of
Sonoma Mountain
With Greg Hayes

MARCH 18

Spring Docent Training
begins
All docents and volunteers
welcome!



DOCENT RECOGNITION DINNER

Over 150 people attended this year's dinner to honor the following:

MEDALLION AWARD: Milo Shepard
Poppy Award: Isabel Rienecker, MAU (photo at left); Debby Bailey, MAU; Dave Chalk, Bill Meyer (photo below); Eleanor Guilford
Presidents Award: John Felton, docent council; Norman Lash, VMNHA; Gayle Lash, MAU
Mentor Award: Lou Leal
Valley of the Moon Leadership Award: Elisa Stancil
Hike Leadership Award: Ron and Jan Stanley
Interpretive Award: Bill Knill, Jerry Kelly, Joan Eiserloh, Geri Gottbrath, Laurie O'Hare. Eleanor Guilford's book, *One Hundred Mile Summers* was given to the interpretive award recipients.

THANKS TO COTTAGE VOLUNTEERS AND PARK STAFF

Thanks to all the volunteers who have come to help in the Cottage garden these past two weeks, their wonderful support continues to be much appreciated—Helga Barron, Barbara Allen, Lauren Johannesson, Don Lennon and Jane Merryman.

On November 2 all Parks staff joined us for a Wednesday work-day, it was a wonderful turnout!
From Jenny Randall

All in one day:

Removed Elderberry and Plum, trimmed Palm

Removed Coyote Brush

Trimmed down 4 Cistus

Cut back the Vinca

Built a French drain

Started repair on 2 gates

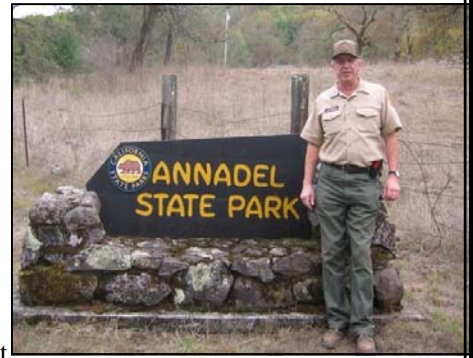
Moved things out of the cottage to make room for the artifacts



THANKS, LES, we'll be seeing you!

Our senior Parks Maintenance Assistant is leaving us, after 29 years with the State Parks. Les Schumacher began his career in State agencies in 1966 at Sonoma State Hospital, then went on to the Division of Forestry, then to Sonoma Coast State Parks in 1977. In 1994 Les came to our three parks and has been doing maintenance of all kinds ever since.

When asked about the differences in the coast parks and the three parks he now takes care of, Les noted that people in Annadel, Sugarloaf and Jack London seem to be more local, and more involved with looking after the resources. "Out at the coast, when we first opened, a lot of the time we didn't see many people. When a ranger got a call out there, it could be anything from a pipe bomb to a suicide or vandalism. You don't see that kind of thing at these other parks, maybe because there is one way in and one way out, or because so many of the visitors are local. People don't tend to cause a problem and pick up after themselves more." He has seen the popularity of coast parks increase dramatically over the years, perhaps "because the gas prices starting in the late seventies gave people the idea to look a little closer to home for a good place to visit. In the beginning there was hardly anyone going there, now on the weekends there are times when you can't find a parking place over the whole 23 miles of coastline." Yet our three parks still remain a bit of a secret, according to Les. "Campers at Sugarloaf have said they lived in the area for years and never knew this place existed!"



Here are some of the jobs, routine and a little less routine, that Les and his two co-workers take care of on a regular basis: bathroom clean up, electrical, roofing, fence repair, deck building and repair, plumbing, carpentry, and sign and flagpole work. The new sign for Sugarloaf will be built, routed and painted by Les, and the gold on the tops of the freshly painted flagpoles is one of the jobs maintenance takes care of. The variety of work has led Les to adopt a very open minded approach to his job. "I like to learn and to teach, it works really well to get other opinions sometimes on the best way to do things."

Born in Dubuque, Iowa, Les looks forward to "finding out what it's like to be retired, I want to do a lot of fishing, and spend some time with my new metal detector looking for artifacts around the coast and in the parks." He and his wife plan to explore some of the nation's other great wildernesses and perhaps take a cruise after his wife retires in a couple of years. High on his list is lots of fishing, collecting some great stories to pass on to his two sons, like his own father shared with him many years ago.

Thanks, Les, for your dedication and your great work, we'll be seeing you around, and look forward to hearing about your adventures!

DAVE AND BILL HIKE SATURDAY DECEMBER 10TH Sonoma Ridge Trail. Meet at 9:45 AM in the upper parking lot for prompt 10 AM departure, rain or shine. This trail, which is a link in the Bay Area Ridge Trail, starts above the lake wandering through redwood stands and gradually ascending to the ridge top. This moderate eight mile hike has a total elevation gain of 1800 feet and will last approximately five hours. Wear sturdy hiking shoes and layered clothing. Please carpool if possible and note there is a \$7.00 vehicle admission fee. We'll bring a cooler with soft drinks to facilitate 'tailgate socializing' in the parking lot after the hike.

NEW DAVE AND BILL HIKES VALLEY OF THE MOON logo T-shirts now available for \$12 Please bring correct change if you are interested. All proceeds go to our annual picnic fund, with your support it could be quite an event next year. Please call Dave Chalk at 539-8847 or Bill Myers at 833-6288 for further information. Or access Bill and Dave Hikes web page www.sonic.net/~fmi/daveandbill.html Hikes co-sponsored by CA State Parks and VMNHA

NEW JACKETS READY FOR PURCHASE AT HOUSE OF HAPPY WALLS

All weather light weight jackets are now available for docents for \$28.00

These comfortable dark blue rain resistant jackets are an attractive solution to the foggy and light rainy days when docents want to be readily identifiable and stay dry at the same time! Get yours while supply lasts at JLSHP

VALLEY OF THE MOON STATE PARKS

INTERPRETIVE NOTES AND EVENTS

A WINTER VISITOR: THE AMERICAN ROBIN

Chuck Whatford,

Once winter arrives in the northern (and colder) parts of North America, the American Robin—as its Latin name—*Turdus migratorius*—implies, migrates to warmer areas, including Sonoma County and the Valley of the Moon. This bird is a familiar winter sight around here, so familiar as to appear common and uninteresting. But did you know that Robins have great hearing and use that ability to locate food? Read on to hear more about this trait.

Adult males have a yellow bill, white feathers with dark streaks on the throat, dark gray-brown feathers on the back, a blackish head and bright brick-red/orange breast feathers that distinguishes their species. Adult females are similar in appearance, but not as brightly colored. Juveniles look like small versions of the adults except for the brown spots on their underside and the bright red front.

According to the Audubon Society Nature guide on Western Forests, the male American Robin’s call is “a vibrant *weep*. It also gives a loud *put-put-put* and, in flight, a lispng *see-lip*. (Better practice these sounds out-loud, because there’ll be a quiz at the end of this column—just kidding).

The American Robin’s range includes most of North American from Alaska to the desert. When winter comes, instead of hibernating like some mammals do in such cold areas, they migrate to warmer areas such as Florida, Texas and California. Then when spring arrives they return to the northern areas from whence they migrated, where people as a sign of spring gladly welcome the distinctive calls of the males.

Robins eat a variety of animal and plant foods. Because they are ground feeders when we see them in open meadows or running along our lawns—stopping at regular intervals and cocking their heads to the side—they are searching for food by sound. The American Robin menu includes earthworms, grubs and adult insects. They have very good hearing and, apparently, are able to hear the digging noises the earthworms, grubs and insects make beneath them and track their movements. Robins also eat berries and other fruits.

American Robins lay blue eggs—an adaptive trait that seems to help the parents recognize eggs laid in their nest by female birds of other species (such as Cowbirds) who tend to parasitize the nests of others by stealthily laying their eggs in other kinds of birds’ nests and then counting on the parents not noticing and raising the young intruder as one of their own. Birds like Robins that invest some of their energy into producing uniquely colored eggs thus enjoy the benefit of being able quickly recognize eggs not their own and as a result greatly improve the chances of their genes being passed on to the next generation of Robins.



Locally look for American Robins during the winter months in open meadows and forest edges at all three of our local State Parks. And, if you have a lawn (or live near a golf course) you’ll see them running around in the early morning in search of breakfast.

- **QUIZ ANSWERS** 1.. 1/12/1876 2. San Francisco 3. Flora
- Wellman London, Virginia Prentiss 4. William Chaney 5. John
- London 6. Oakland 7. Razzle Dazzle 8. A sailor on the seal
- hunting ship, Sophia Sutherland 9..One semester 10. 1897 11.
- Mail Carrier 12. To join Coxey’s Army, protesting unemployment
- 13. The Son of the Wolf, 1900 14. The Call of the Wild , \$2,750.
- 15. 1900 16. 1900 Bessie May Maddern 17. Two, Joan and
- Becky 18. 1903 19. 1904, to cover the Russo-Japanese War 20.
- 1905, a nationwide lecture tour 21. 1905 The Hill Ranch of 130
- acres 22. 1402 acres

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE: JACK LONDON

1. What is Jack London's date of birth?
2. Where was Jack born?
3. Who was Jack's mother? Who was his wet nurse?
4. Who is believed to be Jack's father?
5. Who married Jack's mother when Jack was a baby?
6. Where did Jack grow up?
7. What was the name of Jack's first boat?
8. What was Jack's first big ocean sailing adventure?
9. How long was Jack in college?
10. What year did Jack go to the Yukon in search of gold?
11. What job offer did Jack turn down in order to continue his pursuit as a writer?
12. What initiated Jack's adventure in riding the rails as a tramp?
13. What was the name of Jack's first published book?
14. What book made Jack famous, and how much money did he earn from it?
15. About what year did Jack meet Charmian?
16. In what year did Jack first marry? Who did he marry?
17. How many children did Jack have with his first wife? What were their names?
18. What year was Call of the Wild published?
19. When did Jack go to Japan and Korea? What was his purpose?
20. What year did Jack and Charmian marry? What project was he involved with at the time?
21. What year did Jack make his first land purchase in Glen Ellen? What did he buy?
22. Approximately how many acres did Jack and Charmian have with the ranch when Jack died?

Answers are on previous page. Try the the next 22 questions about Jack and his life in the next Moonletter. Lou Leal, long time volunteer and Jack London interpretive specialist developed these questions to help docents test and increase their knowledge of the life of Jack London. Any who have led hikes or hosted visitors to the Wolf House, Cottage or Beauty Ranch know the visitors have many questions, and having correct answers is vital!
GOOD LUCK!

WHAT DOES THE CALIFORNIA STATE MEDALLION AWARD LOOK LIKE?

At the awards dinner I was hoping to catch a glimpse of the mighty Medallion Award. After all, it is the highest form of thanks the State gives a volunteer, and it takes a special nomination and a real long term contribution to even begin to make the cut! So when Milo got his last month, I had my eyes on Greg. I was expecting some serious Bling! Like a big medal on a velvet rope, or an embossed paperweight in gold.. After reciting a great poem, Greg handed Milo a little velvet box. It turns out the Medallion Award is subtle...um, shall we say discreet. Oh heck, it's small! The real value of the Medallion is measured in the joy of giving, and the reflection of that gift in the lives of generations to come. In short, the Medallion is small~but mighty!.

~Elisa Stancil



WOLF HOUSE EXPRESS STATUS REPORT

As anyone who has driven, ridden on, or been remotely associated with the Wolf House Express (G.E.M.) car knows, it has had problems since it was purchased. Now after a few years of fighting its troubles, we have implemented changes and modifications so that it can meet our rigorous demands.

As of last November 9th, 2005, we have replaced the motor, the trans-axle, the charger, the batteries, and

other miscellaneous components. And as of that date, the car still could not make it through a four hour shift. On November 10th, the charger was taken to Sacramento for repair and modification and was reinstalled in the vehicle the same day. The modified charger should allow the batteries to charge to 100%. In addition, a maintenance-free battery was installed in its own box under the "trunk". It has its own separate charger that comes on whenever the car is plugged in. No other action is required to charge the auxiliary battery. Additional controls were installed to allow this battery to be "switched in" to enable the car to be moved with a low battery condition. The car has gotten stuck at the Wolf House on numerous occasions despite our efforts to keep it charged between trips. From now on it should only necessary to follow the printed instruction on the placard mounted on the center of the dash. A switch under a red safety cover has been installed just to the left of this placard. Operating this switch places the extra battery in service allowing the car to return to the garage to be charged. This switch is ONLY to be operated under emergency conditions. It is NEVER to be used unless the charge is so low that the car will not move. If use of this "Boost" system is required, please drop off all passengers and return directly to the garage for a complete recharge.

If you should have any suggestions or encounter any problems, please notify park management and contact John Felton so that he may follow up. John's telephone number is (707) 539-5831.

These improvements were made and paid by the Valley of the Moon Natural History Association.

NEWS FLASH: LAKE AT BEAUTY RANCH

The Jack London dam needs some relief from winter storms and high lake water levels. Park staff plan to release some water from the lake over the next several weeks and provide some room or 'freeboard' for winter storms.

The historic Jack London Lake is a cultural and scenic treasure within Jack London State Historic Park, and its preservation is a high priority to California State Parks. In recent decades, the character of the lake has changed. It has filled up with sediment, shrinking the area of open water, and aquatic vegetation such as cattails have grown thick around the lake's periphery. The dam that holds the lake has significant cracks in it, and leaks constantly in a number of places.

Parks is looking at possible ways to restore this site, and take some of the pressure off the old dam. Funding is being sought to pursue the concept of temporarily emptying the lake, and dredge the excess sediment and organic material out of it. The original size and shape of the lake will be determined through aerial photo interpretation, review of historic photos, and an initial ground survey using wooden staking as lake perimeter markers. Materials from the lakebed would most likely be removed in layers. The first is the live vegetative material, such as cattails and tulles and other wetland plants. The second layer is the approximately one foot deep layer of decomposed organic material. The lowest layer consists of spoils or sedimentary material that has settled on the original lakebed surface.

Conceptually, once the lake is dredged, much of the dredged material from the bottom and back side of the lakebed will be used to reshape the large erosion gully on the Vineyard Road. This gully has been deeply incised by water flowing down the 'side spillway.' The road is currently impassable to vehicles due to the extent of erosion. The dredged sedimentary material from the lowest layer will be placed in the Vineyard Road gully and spread on the native soil surface until adjacent topography is matched. This will reduce the excessive sediment loss that has been occurring along the Vineyard Road.

An upcoming Recreation Trails Program Grant Project is to reroute the Vineyard Road and Quarry Trail to allow safe trail connections between the Jack London Lake, Heritage Redwood Tree and Sonoma Developmental Center lands. This work is currently funded, and contract award is anticipated to occur in late 2005. Threatened northern spotted owls are known to nest in the vicinity, and spring surveys will be conducted to verify 2006 nesting activity. If owls are present, then trail construction will take place outside of nesting season, or in fall-winter 2006 into 2007.

It is a priority to the State to discontinue use of the side spillway. The side spillway is located too high on the side of the dam, and doesn't allow water to spill at the level that it should. The resulting high water level is causing additional pressure on the dam that a structure this old should not experience. As part of this conceptual plan, water will be released from the lake during winter to lower the lake level using the existing valve and pipe in the dam that flows into Kohler Creek. Between 2' and 6' of 'freeboard' will be maintained during the winter months, perhaps more. The valve will be closed in the spring when all threat of overflow has passed.

No new spillway is planned to be constructed after rehabilitation of the side spillway. All of the overflow water can spill into its original channel in Kohler Creek. A potential future restoration project may include a water level control device (pipe) that runs around the end of the dam. If this can be designed and constructed, it may relieve the necessity of opening and closing the Kohler Creek dam valve seasonally. Future investigations will determine this feasibility.

By Cyndy Shafer and Marla Hastings cshaf@parks.ca.gov; mhast@parks.ca.gov

DON MONIHAN, MARLA HASTINGS, JOHN CROSSMAN, ANGY NOWIKI and ELISA STANCIL visit with engineers to look at the crack in the dam, the leaks and the erosion as winter draws near. The crack was revealed after berries were removed.



THE BENZIGER FAMILY WINERY donated a crew of laborers led by Mike Benziger and Matt Atkinson to remove vegetation from in front of the London Lake Dam, open .6 miles of Cowan Trail, reinstall an interpretive panel in the Beauty Ranch and install a bench at the Vista Point on Mountain Trail. Thank you to Sheryl for being the liaison for the work party, Toni for her expertise on the trail work, Karen K. for her culinary delight feeding the crew lunch, Greg for representing the VMNHA and the VMNHA for donating the funds to feed the crew. This was an exceptional example of partnership at its finest! And to top it all off, the crew has asked to return and complete the final .2 miles...they did not want to leave a job incomplete! **THANK YOU!!**

Angy Nowiki

HIKE LEADER APPRENTICES NEEDED,!!

Intrepid hike leaders Dave Chalk and Bill Myers lead strenuous monthly hikes. As they glide into their 'golden years' the joke has become which one will outlast the other. Since nothing is certain except death and taxes, they are certain replacements will be needed to continue the tradition. In a few years it could be "Ted and Alice Hikes" for example. Dave and Bill seek apprentices willing to carry on their five year labor of love , leading hikes with an average of 35 people attending! Dave and Bill hope to have at least one more docent accompanying them every month. Responsibilities are straightforward: mutually pick and faithfully attend a hike date every month rain or shine, help choose interesting hiking adventures, be prepared to assist with the monthly email broadcast to over 350 people, and eventually learn how to maintain the web page.

If you are a new docent and wish to be a "Dave and Bill Apprentice" you will be required to attend the Spring 2006 Docent Training for Silverado Sector of California State Parks. Training, on Saturdays, begins March 18, 2006—May 6, 2006. 10-3. This is a wonderful opportunity to join a community of hikers, docents and volunteers. If you are interested please contact

Dave 539-8847 or Bill 833-6288.

<http://www.sonic.net/~fmi/daveandbill.html>.

