

Hastings Natural History Reservation

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Hastings is a Reserve in
the University of California
Natural Reserve System

June 1991

Weather Report

June weather was extremely variable. June was notably cool, with daily highs in the 70's (°F) and lows in the 50's. By the last day of June, a more typical daily high temperature surpassed the 95° mark. Trace amounts of rain were observed on the 19th and 20th. More details are lacking as the computer on the our new weather station, for unknown reasons, stopped recording from the 13th to the end of the month. Anyway, we finish this 1990-91 rainfall year with a decent annual total, 18.5 in., - almost exactly the median for the last 40+ years. Except for the perennial grasses, our savannas have burned to the famous California gold. California buckeye are in full flower, as are the California rose along the creeks. Finch Creek's flow slipped under the sand and rocks just below the Martin Road bridge. Deer fawns are losing their spots, while young ground squirrels explore new holes. Woodpeckers and bluebirds fledged the few young they could manage by the end of the month. A black bear ambled by several people while wandering all over the old Tularcitos Land Grant. For the first time in over 20 years, coyotes were chasing among the deer along the hills above Big Creek on the Hastings Reservation.

Research and Education

Birds

Acorn woodpeckers were monitored by Walt Koenig and affiliated field assistants. Janis Dickinson and her field assistants continued to record bluebird breeding behavior. Jill Goldstein, Pippa Shepherd and Roger Emond lived in the bunkhouse. Geoff Morse and Dan Albano lived in the Schoolhouse Carriage House bedrooms. Dr. Jenella Loye (U. Utah & UC-Davis) worked from Hastings three days in June to band young birds and collect nest parasites in nest boxes used by western bluebirds on Oak Ridge Ranch, Rana Creek Ranch and Rancho San Carlos.

Philip Hooge (UCB-MVZ) left Hastings for a couple of months to start seasonal work in Glacier Bay National Park. Among other things, Philip is starting a radio telemetry study of marine mammals.

Dr. Stanback (UCB-MVZ) and his wife Nancy lived in the Red House. They are still planning to move to Seattle in August for his post doctoral appointment at the University of Washington. Dr. Stanback is looking into the possibility of working on brood reduction in hornbill in Africa (Namibia).

Elizabeth Ross (UCB-MVZ) moved to Fanny's cabin to house-sit for Philip Hooge. Elizabeth continues her observations of Scrub Jays. Elizabeth and Philip Hooge passed their Novice and Technician tests for new ham radio licenses.

Dr. Morné Duplessis, a fellow at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of Ornithological Studies, University of Cape Town lived in the Hastings Cabin. Dr. Duplessis continues with his experimental augmentation of food to woodpecker groups. Morné is also working with Dr. Wes Weathers to study metabolic rates of woodpeckers.

Dr. Wes Weathers (UC Davis) spent two days at Hastings in June, collaborating with Morné, Walt Koenig and Janis Dickinson on a physiological study of woodpeckers and western bluebirds.

Steve Rothstein (UC Santa Barbara) visited with Walt Koenig and Janis Dickinson to discuss potential field sites.

Lichen Ecology

Jean Knops, (ASU-Tempe) moved to Hasting with his wife, Anne Royalty on June 9. They moved into the Stucco House as relatively long term Hastings Residents. Welcome to the reservation, Anne!

Oak Reproduction

Walt Koenig, along with Jim Griffin, in collaboration with Jean Knops, Bill Carmen, Mark Stanback and Bill Schlesinger (Duke University) were awarded a four year grant of \$85,000 from the California Integrated Hardwood Range Management Program to study patterns in production of acorns. The funds will support one field assistant and allow analysis of a series of soil properties and environmental variables associated with the variation in how many acorns are produced by various individuals and species of oaks in central California.

With the use of very large chain saw from Oak Ridge Ranch, Mark Stromberg cut a slab from the 500+ year old Valley Oak at Laguna Conejo. We are saving this slab in the Lower Barn for the arrival of the representatives of the University of Arizona Tree Ring Lab from Tucson, Arizona. They will polish the slab to glean data on the patterns of growth rings and their correlations with drought cycles in Carmel Valley.

Bees

John Barthell (UCB-Entomology) spent each Sunday and Wednesday at Hastings in June. So far, no one has shot up his large experimental panels in the open meadows. John continues to collect virtually all the insects at the flowering plants each week. John has been using and contributing to our mini herbarium of 3" x 5" sheets, now at over 300 species.

Amphibians and Reptiles

California Tiger Salamanders are surviving very well in Laguna Conejo. Dr. Brad Shaffer, (Zoology, UC-Davis) visited with Walt Koenig for two days in June. Brad and Walter discussed the possibility of starting a population biology study of the Tiger Salamander in the Laguna Conejo area.

Carmel Ranch Company Research Project

Mark Stromberg, Jim Griffin and Ruth Griffin worked in the office, getting our data organized, herbarium updated and soil samples ready. We sent about 90 samples to Marion Stanley, Monterey County Farm Advisor, on the 7th. Data sheets were summarized and we added new data to our computer files during the month.

On June 10, Kent Heneks generously shared a morning with Jeff Froke, natural resource manager at Rancho San Carlos, and Mark. We toured several grassland study plots on Rana Creek Ranch and discussed various options of open land management in Carmel Valley. Most of the riparian areas on Rana Creek Ranch and many of the upland sites on Rana Creek support a wide diversity of plants and animals in association with the careful grazing program at Rana Creek Ranch. We all became better acquainted with the intensively monitored grazing program on Rana Creek Ranch. Jeff Froke is considering the various options available in the land management plan he is helping to prepare for Rancho San Carlos. Jeff is also sharing a Toshiba 5200 computer with Hastings for the analysis of the data set in the project. We appreciate the use of this fast and portable MS-DOS computer.

Cynthia Brown, a graduate student at UC Davis, Agronomy and Range Science, visited with Mark on June 18 and 19. We met with Tim Curran (Oak Ridge Ranch) and Kent Heneks (Rana Creek) and visited several of the grassland study sites. We hope Cynthia will decide to work with this project and we can support her doctoral research. Dr. John Menke and Dr. Kevin Rice (UC-Davis), both familiar with our work at Hastings, are on Cynthia's doctoral advisory committee.

David Amme visited Carmel Valley in June to collect grass seeds, visit the local land managers and continue evaluation of potential reseeding sites. We had no class visits in June.

Facilities

We now have our first large storage room, free from woodrats and mice! Mark Johnson added a frame wall and siding to the south-facing bay and sealed up those doors in our new lower barn. Already we are storing extra rugs and bedding there, as Jean and Anne brought many personal items with them. Mark also made several storage racks and moved our piles of lumber, pvc pipe and assorted odd items into the north bay. All our lights are working now and the construction contract has been completed. With this move of equipment into the open shed of the lower barn, most of the piles of material under tarps have been cleaned up. A gift from Fanny Arnold made the storage room possible. Thanks again, Fanny.

Mark also completed a small shed for the generator at the new lab. We can now simply start the generator and let it run in its small outdoor shed, with the noise deflected away from the housing area. June saw another day without electrical power, so the generator is used rather regularly to keep our collections of DNA samples "ultra cold". Mark refurbished the shower stall in the Ranch House, making it easier to keep clean. Mark also replaced the screen door on the Ranch House, as the old one was literally falling apart. In addition to these projects, Mark finished up with the mowing, kept up with the patrol needs and completed too many small maintenance needs to mention.

Plans continue for the replacement of the Bunkhouse. Initial revisions of plans submitted last month have been redrawn once again and are under review by Fanny Arnold. Current plans include a community laundry facility in the bunkhouse.

Fanny Arnold has been working with Roger Samuelsen of the Natural Reserve System to finalize the gift of the Robertson House and Fanny's Cabin to the University. Paperwork has been going back and forth during June to prepare for this transition. Fanny hired Troy Hussey to install some additional cabinets around the refrigerator and along a wall shared by the electric range. Troy also installed a pocket door in the living room so that winter residents can seal off the living space and heat only the kitchen and living room with the wood stove. This is a great improvement over the blanket we hung in the doorway last winter!

For the past two years, the Robertson House has supported a constant stream of appreciative researchers and classes. This large house and the nearby cabin used by resident graduate students have greatly expanded the ability of Hastings to support research in Carmel Valley. We are very grateful to Fanny Arnold for her gift of these buildings and land.