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Hastings Natural History Reservation



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A Biological Research Station of the
Museum of Vertebrate Zoology
University of California, Berkeley
and a part of the University of California's
Natural Reserve System



Weather Report

July 1993

July was warm and dry, as should be expected. A high of 99°F was recorded on the 31st, and most days reached highs in the 80's. Average 5 cm soil temperature was 91°F during the month. Relative humidity readings are probably no longer trustworthy as our sensor is aging and occasionally recorded readings near 99% this month. Clear, warm days with low humidity finally saw Big Creek dry up at the road crossings. Finch Creek still flows through Hastings, but slowly between many pools. Blomquist Pond still has some water in it, and many newly transformed Tiger Salamanders have emerged. At least 10 yearling western pond turtles dive in at any approach to the pond. Quail have joined into larger communal flocks and at least three flocks of turkeys are wandering around on Hastings. One of our new field assistants inadvertently rode a bike down our dirt lane, ending up between a mother bobcat and her young. After some mutual staring and backing off, Christian and the bobcat separated warily. Another neurologically impaired Hastings mammal staggered around and expired in a heap, this time on the living room floor of the Ranch House. Joan saved the specimen but Fish and Game wanted something bigger for testing.

Research and Education

By mid-July most field projects had wound down and all of the field assistants departed from the Bunkhouse and Robertson House. Jenella Loye (UC-Davis) and Scott Carroll (UC-Davis) spent a couple of days in early July wrapping up the bluebird parasite project for the year. Geoff Pease continues to make occasional day visits to Hastings, presumably still working for Jenella Loye. Walt Koenig and Janis Dickinson were busy writing up data, then later presenting papers at the Animal Behavior Society meetings in Davis. Several Hastings research projects were featured at the annual Ecological Society of America meetings in Madison, Wisconsin. Jean Knops discussed our leaping lizards; Western Fence Lizards either fall or leap out of trees in their home range with some regularity. John Barthell discussed the spread of an exotic solitary bee across California (another species from the Mediterranean, able to tolerate the hot, dry climate here and thrive on yellow star thistle, another weed of similar origin). Mark Stromberg discussed succession patterns (or lack thereof) in Hastings' old fields and relicts of native grassland. Lisa-Natalie Anjozian, working with grassland research here and at Rana Creek Ranch, finally trapped out all the mice and chased out all the bats in the Hastings Cabin. A David Mullen, EIP Assoc., visited Hastings as part of a EIS for the proposed enlargement of the Los Padres dam on the nearby Carmel River. He reported finding a population of Red-legged frogs (*Rana aurora*) in Robertson Creek. Dave Wake and Mark Stromberg spent an afternoon touring the reserve and we had a quick look for the reported frogs.

Jean Knops, graduate student at Arizona State (Botany), worked for two weeks with Walt Koenig at Hastings. Jean and Walt continued their sampling of oak trees. Gretchen LeBuhn (graduate student, UCSB-Botany) spent four nights at the Red House, scattered over the month as she monitors the breeding biology of *Lupinus formosus*. Gretchen and Jim Griffin made several botanical surveys of Hastings. Our UCB resident graduate student, Ginger Bolen, left Fanny's Cabin and moved back to Berkeley in late July to prepare for the fall semester. Jason Hamilton, UCSB-Botany, spent 4 days here with Jim Griffin and Mark Stromberg. Jason is re-mapping nearly 1,000 individual clumps of *Stipa (Nasella) pulchra* which Jim Griffin tagged and mapped over 20 years ago. These data will then be described in a collaborative report.

One class visited Hastings- that of Judith Wagner, Cal State-Hayward, a group of 15

ornithologists who had a great time staying in the Robertson House and birding along Robertson Creek.

Hugh Drummond, Universidad de Mexico, Centro de Ecologia, visited Walt Koenig during the month, and presented his findings regarding Blue-footed Boobies on the 13th to those of us at Hastings.

The Free Natural History Lecture Series kept us busy. Brad Shaffer (amphibians) was here the 13th and 14th, Michael Evans (native plants in gardens) on the 20th and 21st, and Reg Barrett (California cougar) was here on the 27th and 28th. Discussion of the lecture series made the local newspaper each week and the talk by Brad Shaffer was covered by the Salinas/Monterey television station. Reg Barrett's talk resulted in a local newspaper article. About 60-80 people are attending in Pacific Grove and another 40-60 attend in Carmel Valley. Many questions follow the talks, and most reflect a serious audience with a genuine interest in learning.

Two new field assistants/volunteers have moved into the Bunkhouse; Christian Heierli (M. S. at Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) and Constance Rehbehn (Biology student, from Hamburg). Christian and Constance are conducting watches of Acorn Woodpeckers and processing the Tiger Salamanders as they emerge from Blomquist Pond.

People, Places and Habitations

With the Robertson House and Bunkhouse empty for a brief period, we had a cleaning service come in for the annual post-spring season cleaning. Both houses required relatively little cleaning this year.

Our big event was the start of construction of the new entry gate for those of us sharing Martin Road. Posts for the fence were set, the gate hinge and closure posts were installed and the gate was hung. Underground conduits were installed for phone and power lines, and the power line was installed. Final connections to PG&E and Pac Bell are due during the second week of August. Mark Johnson worked closely with the contractor, checking progress and helping make the many decisions on minor changes as various difficulties were encountered. In general, the gate is following the plans very closely. It should be operational by mid to late August.

Reserve Steward Mark Johnson worked on the Datsun 510 sedan used this summer by the field assistants. It had an oil leak and a minor radiator leak. Unfortunately, neither were observed or reported in time and the engine is a loss. We had the vehicle towed to a service station for evaluation and storage pending a decision. Mark was busy with the usual work, pumping water, checking roads/buildings, doing the mail run, hauling the recycling and many other things so necessary to keep us going.

Free Natural History Lecture Series... An Opportunity to Learn about our Environment

Our remaining talks are:

- Aug. 10-11. Professor Luis Baptista, Cal Academy. Variation and Dialects in Songs of Birds
- Aug. 17-18. Professor Rocky Gutiérrez, Humboldt St., Spotted Owls Conservation & Biology

Talks are on Tuesdays at the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History (Forest and Main) at 7:30 pm and at the same time on Wednesdays in Carmel Valley Village at the Hidden Valley Music Center (Carmel Valley Road at Ford Rd.) Hope to see you there.