

# 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 the University of  
California's  
**Natural Reserve System**



## Weather Report

May 1993

Rain totaled 0.32" from five days, with some recorded as late as May 31. Our rainfall is now 27.34" for the season. May started off with several days with highs in the lower 90's (°F) but later in the month it cooled to daily highs in the 70's with morning lows in the 50's. Frost was recorded on one morning (12th). May's late rains arrived just as most annual grasses had browned over so we saw some continued growth. With this wet weather, the sycamore leaves continue to shrivel and die due to a disease promoted by wet springs. Bluebirds, on the other hand, are doing very well this spring, occupying nearly 90 boxes compared to about 50 in previous drought years. Similarly, Acorn Woodpeckers are having a good breeding season. Tiger Salamanders hatched earlier this year have yet to start emerging from Blomquist Pond, which although shrinking steadily, was home to a Green-backed Heron for a while. Big Creek trickled all month through headquarters and was above ground in several places along the lane, including both crossings. One hatchling western pond turtle was found and marked. Long-eared Owls are nesting in Madrone Canyon above the office buildings. Several small mammals (Wood Rat, Chipmunk, Opossum) were found along Big Creek with obvious infections/failures of their central nervous systems. These were reported to Fish and Game. Young of the California ground squirrels are especially abundant this year.

### Carmel Valley Natural History Lecture Series...

Hastings, the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History and the Hidden Valley Music Center are pleased to announce a series of free public lectures to be given in Carmel Valley and Pacific Grove. Grants from a local benefactor and the Rancho San Carlos Foundation have made these possible. Lectures will be at the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History on Tuesdays, and at the Hidden Valley Music Center on Wednesday evenings. Refreshments to be served. Lectures will be about 45 minutes long, starting each evening at 7:30 pm. Here is the schedule:

- July 13-14. Professor Brad Shaffer, UC-Davis. California Tiger Salamanders
- July 20-21. Dr. Mike Evans, Tree of Life Nursery, California Native Oaks/Plants in Landscapes
- July 27-28. Professor Reg Barrett, Mountain Lions and Man, Central Coast of California
- Aug. 3-4. Professor Bob Lane, UC-Berkeley. Lyme Disease, Ticks & Other Parasites...
- Aug. 10-11. Professor Louise Baptista, Cal Academy. Bird Songs, Whistles and Translations
- Aug. 17-18. Professor Rocky Gutiérrez, Humboldt St., Spotted Owls Conservation & Biology

## Research and Education

Researchers working on Bluebirds and Acorn Woodpeckers included the same people detailed in the April newsletter. Mark Stanback hired an assistant, Rebecca Seaman, who moved into the Bunk House. Gretchen LeBuhn (UCSB) moved to the Red House and continued her study of lupines. Gretchen shared the Red House with Karen Rasmussen who commuted from Davis for her ongoing grassland study here. Brad Shaffer and Louise Whittaker (UCD) returned for a weekend visit and count of larval salamanders in nearby ponds. Mark McKnight (UCD) spent a successful weekend collecting small mammals for a statewide population genetics survey. Gordon Frankie (UCB) spent a

day checking his bee traps for Africanized honey bees. Dr. G. B. Fairchild, Smithsonian Entomology, spend a day collecting flies. Mark Stromberg presented a paper at the Wild (Feral, Exotic, etc.) Pig Conference in San Luis Obispo, sponsored by the UCB Integrated Hardwood Range Management Program.

Walt Koenig, coordinating a group of co-authors, had the first of the papers on acorn production accepted for publication (Ecology). This paper will discuss the patterns seen in five species of oaks over a 13 year period and examine some associated patterns of rainfall, elevation, etc. A wide audience of academics and land managers are looking forward to seeing this first detailed examination of the acorn production data.

Grassland research included final data collection on an experimental planting of grasses (annual exotics. vs. perennial natives) on gopher tailings. Our search for an intern to work through UCD Agronomy continued, and Karen Rasmussen continued data collection on the last two years of experimental planting. At Rana Creek Ranch, Brian Heneks and Paul Kephart and I saw an additional planting of 8,000 plugs of native grass. A proposal to include farmland on Rancho San Carlos in our program of production of native perennial grass seed was received.

Two classes visited Hastings. Sam McGinnis of Cal. St. Hayward spent a night at the Robertson House with a general field biology class. Craig Benkman (UCSC) brought his ornithology class for a night at the Robertson House as well. Thanks to Jim Griffin for giving them both an introductory tour and to Walt Koenig for a lecture to the Ornithology class.

### People, Places and Habitations

Our ultra-cold (-85°C) freezer broke down! Thanks to the kind folks at Dennis Power's lab at Hopkins Marine Lab, we had a place to put our tissue collection. We hauled the freezer to a repair contractor in San Jose. Two weeks later, Mark Johnson brought it back with a new secondary compressor. We appreciate the financial assistance from MVZ for repairs.

Other big news was the new septic system installed in the Red House. Peninsula Septic Tank Service, from the Village, installed a new septic line, concrete septic tank and a new rock-filled drain field. The old tank was filled with sand and covered. Mark Johnson modified the plumbing under the house to tie into the new system. With the browning of the grasses, Mark also spent a number of days mowing firebreaks.

Plans for a shared gate on Martin Road continue to move along. Legal review of the agreements continued before the contractor can get started. John Boekenooen is building a new barn, and there was