

Hastings Natural History Reservation



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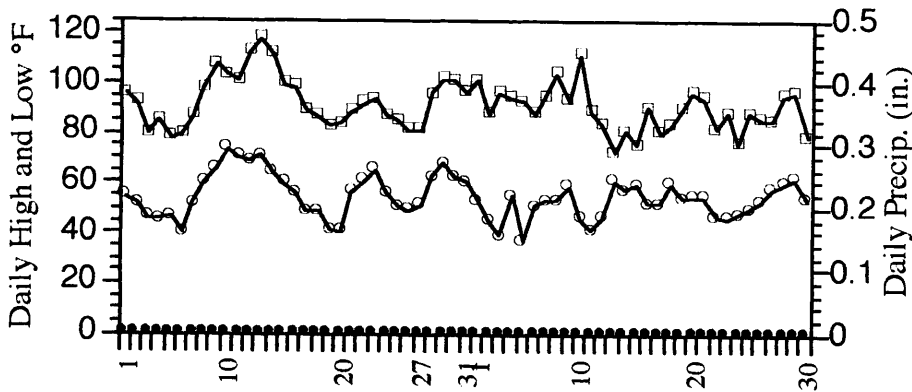
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A Biological Research Station of the
Museum of Vertebrate Zoology
University of California, Berkeley
and a part of the University of California's
Natural Reserve System



August and September 1996



We start a new year for keeping track of rainfall; nothing so far. Our real news was the record-setting high temperature in August. On August 13 we reached 117°F and 111°F again on Aug 14 and Sep 10!

Mean high daily temperatures for August and September were above the long-term averages, 6.3° and 5 °F respectively. Similarly, daily lows were above average, 6.4° and 3.7°F respectively. Finch Creek still harbors a few calm pools at noon under the Martin Road bridge.

Our lion sightings are more exciting

than ever! In late June, Josh Wiesberg watched a lion feed near the Robertson House. Early (1am) on Wednesday, September 18th, Janis saw a lion cross the road near the Lower Barn. Later that morning, drag marks on the trail between the Ranch House and School House led to a partially buried deer carcass in the oak leaves just above the trail. Our high school students were very impressed that Wednesday afternoon by the kill. One bobcat was near the kill during the daylight hours for several days. David Gubernick got some great photos of that bobcat and he set up an automatic camera. Two different bobcats and one adult lion ate at the kill. By the weekend, the kill was mostly gone. Although the oaks along Big Creek near the headquarters are dropping acorns, we only have 5-10 deer nearby. In past years, herds of over 20 were common.

Walt's statewide census of acorn crops indicates this is a good year for Blue oaks, terrible for Canyon (Live) and Black oaks, but not bad for Coast Live oaks and Valley oaks.

Research and Education

Walter, David Gubernick (assistant editor of the Condor-Cooper Ornithological Association) and Rickey Wolfe produced another issue of the Condor. Manuscripts continue to come and go in piles every day.

Walt Koenig and Joey Haydock continued their work on the behavioral ecology of Acorn Woodpeckers. With a decent acorn crop, there were 7 fall nests. Joey climbed to one nest and found a young starling. This is very odd- it would suggest that the woodpeckers were feeding a young starling? Walt attended the AOU meetings in Boise, Idaho.

Janis Dickinson and Jon Akre, her lab assistant, continue their work on the western bluebirds. Janis was elected as a "councilor" in the International Society for Behavioral Ecology. Janis, Joey and Ginger Bolen each made presentations while attending meetings of this group, held in Canberra. Janis also presented her work at the Animal Behavior Society meetings in Flagstaff.

Laura Ritinski and Jon Akre (Robertson House) were joined by Carol Church and Jeff Parker about the first of September. Carol and Jeff will continue as winter field assistants on the woodpecker project. Laura will be leaving at the end of October, and has been helping Joey in the lab.

We added a ZIP drive to the computer in the new lab in an effort to clean up the hard drive and get it ready for running the big GIS files. Turns out there are only expansion slots for 64Mb and we need about 90Mb to run the GIS. So, we hope to find another computer.

Jean Knops (Univ. Minnesota) spent two weeks here with Walt and on the big road trip to census acorn production. Gordon Frankie (UC-Berkeley, Entomology) spent several days here on several occasions, each time adding to the bee collections. Brad Shaffer (UC-Davis) came down to admire the dry ponds. I spent a couple of days fixing the fences around Blomquist pond and Laguna Conejo. They are now cow resistant again; electric fences are operational.

People, Places and Habitations

Although Mark Johnson was busy with the usual demands of the facilities here, a couple of special projects got done. First, our Helen Johnson Tractor has been in the sun for the last year. Our Pebble Beach mower has been taking up space in the workshop. We really needed to protect the tractor, so Mark built a 20' x 14' shed addition to the workshop. It has a metal roof and we will add redwood siding from the old upper barn; taking some boards from the inner walls.

The other project was replacement of the wooden door on the public restroom with a new metal door and jamb. This seals tightly enough so the room can be used as a darkroom. Mark finished the new sink and counter top in the restroom and wired the restroom.

With all the heat, the lab (and our offices) would often reach 95° during the day. I looked into cooling systems for these spaces and got an estimate of \$15,000. Well, I called one of the larger cooler companies I knew from my days in Arizona. They were able to ship all the materials we need to install an evaporative cooler for the lab for about \$600. Mark and I can cut a hole in the roof and install it in late October. I will continue to investigate the possibilities of using a heat pump in the offices for both heating and cooling.

Judie Telfer, Monterey County Herald, interviewed Sanj Muttulingam on Sept. 19 and published a front page article on his work with the gophers here; "Key findings from pesky rodent: gopher study may benefit endangered species" Mon. Sept. 23, 1996. This newspaper account is based in part on an article in a scientific journal (Sanjayan and Crooks, 1996, Nature 381:586).

From September 4-6, a group of 8 people from the equivalent of the Nature Conservancy from Belgium visited Hastings as a part of their tour of reserved lands in the western United States. They helped gather native plant seeds for later use in grassland and riparian restoration projects I am doing in Carmel Valley. They used both the Bunk House and the Ranch House.

Lee Crasnow is taking the lead with the Carmel High School students who are doing community service here at Hastings. Lee shows up with great regularity each Wednesday. He is planning to organize volunteers to plant about 50 valley oaks on old fields at Hastings, using acorns from the plaque tree and the tree just above the Scott Barn. This will be part of his Eagle Scout activity. The students have collected the acorns and we have the tree protectors ready to go.

Staff, Visiting Scientists, Students, Field Assistants, etc.

Resident Staff, Families

Janis Dickinson
Walt Koenig
w/ Dale, Phoebe Koenig
Judine Krocztz

Mark Stromberg
Barbara Stromberg
w/ Brian Stromberg
Andrew Stromberg

Off-Site Staff

Mark Johnson
Rickey Wolfe

Resident Visiting Researchers

David Gubernick (Psychology PI)
Joey Haydock (UCB- Koenig PD)

Resident Graduate Students

Ginger Bolen (UCB-MVZ)
Peter Trenham (UC-Davis, Zoology)

Visiting Graduate Students

Sanjayan Muttulingam(UCSC)

Visiting Faculty/Staff, (Aug-Sept.)

Gordon Frankie (UC-Berkeley, Entomology)

Resident Field Assistants

Laura Ritinski (Woodpeckers)
Jeff Parks (Woodpeckers)
Carol Church (Woodpeckers)
Jon Akre (Bluebirds)

Carmel High Students

Austin Camp
Maia Entropo
Lilly Woytak
Lee Krasnow
Jen Waddel