



Finch Creek Gazette

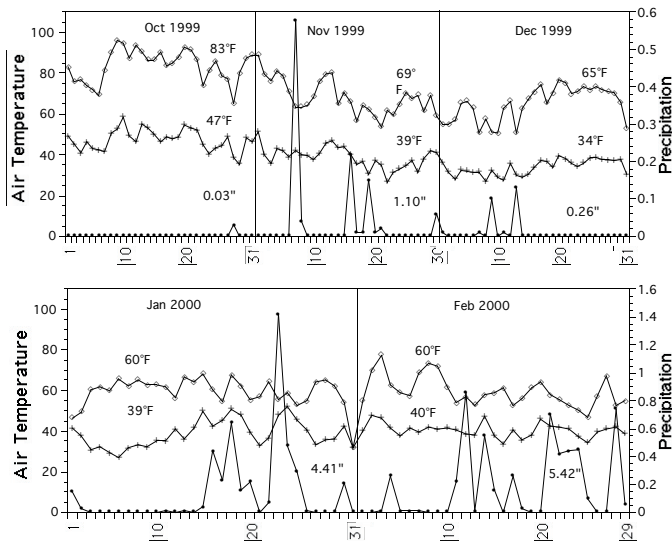
The Quarterly Newsletter for Friends and Members of the Hastings Natural History Reservation

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

Website: <http://www.hastingsreserve.org> (for more detailed newsletter, with color pictures - and lots more)

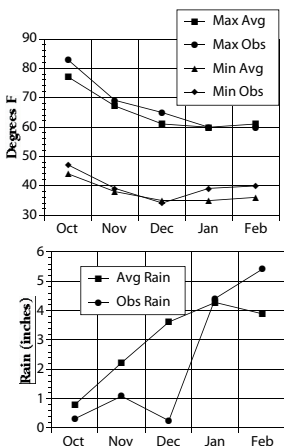
Vol 13:1 Fall, 1999- Winter, 2000

Weather



Greetings. It has been a while. As it was a dry, warm fall, life here pretty much went to sleep, formed seeds or migrated to moister climates. Warm dry days meant the fall colors in the trees and shrubs were dramatic and long-lived. A Palm Warbler was seen in January on School Hill.

It has been warmer than normal. For the last five months, the long term average daily highs and lows (10 numbers) were exceeded by the observed averages in 7 cases. That is, we are 1-3°F warmer than long-term on 7 of 10 averages for last five months. Chance? Global warming? Anyway, I plotted these variances from the averages on the chart to the side here, along with a similar plot for rainfall.



As you can see, it has been drier than normal. October, November and December were drier than average. January rainfall barely exceeded average, then February was relatively wet, with

many cloudy, damp days. Our long term total rainfall for this period is 14.8", and we have either 11.22" (our gauge at Ranch House) or 10.96" (CDF gauge on hill). This 2% difference is probably about as close as possible for two nearby weather stations (800 feet).

Outreach Program News

Open House May 6- With Rana Creek

Once again, Hastings and Rana Creek Habitat Restoration will share a series of public talks and information sessions. In the morning, researchers at Hastings will present their ongoing research on turkeys, woodpeckers, insects, bluebirds, soils, and native grasslands. We will tour a 2-year old native grassland restoration on Hastings. Then, over to Rana Creek for presentation on native plant nursery, native grass seed production, habitat restoration planning. We will hear from several representatives from the Carmel River Watershed Council, particularly the very active cattlemen's working group- the "Tularcitos Range Stewardship Association". We hope you can join us.

Course for K-12 Teachers

From Aug 14 to 23, we are offering a course for K-12 teachers, with all expenses paid. Kim Smiley, of Pacific Valley Unified School District will be offering a curriculum she based on oaks, "From Insects to Oaks". This five day environmental workshop emphasizes teaching techniques to develop students into "local experts."

The workshop, located in the upper portion of the Carmel Valley at Hastings Natural Reserve, offers an on-site opportunity for teachers to observe and study local plants and wildlife. Food, lodging, curriculum, and study collections will be provided at Hastings. Teachers will leave this workshop with standards-based curriculum lessons which emphasize the riparian and oak savanna habitats so prevalent in Monterey County.

Participants will learn about the importance of the oak woodlands by partaking in lessons from "Stoked on Oaks", an award-winning curriculum developed

(continued on p 3)

Website News

Since the last newsletter, the website has grown considerably. Mark Johnson help me put up several web cams. One tracked visitors to some road-killed animals- including vultures, bobcats, mountain lion, and an abundance of insects which quickly devoured the remains of a hog one day. The time-lapse movie of that melting pig alone is worth a visit. We have a web cam in a western bluebird box where 2-4 birds spend the nights. We hope they build a nest there and are successful this spring. Another camera was set up to observe acorn woodpeckers in the plaque tree. With only ISDN, we need to figure out a way to gather periodic, interesting series of pictures, but can look forward to live streaming. I am setting up a new underwater camera to monitor the development of salamander and frog eggs in the spring. We are linked to the Carmel Middle School's new weather station, and archive those data. Our weather data is also on line, and historical RAWS data can be searched and recovered on line. We have a wide variety of natural history information on the website and we add more each week. Our continued thanks to our host Universal Internet in Carmel- Brian Steckler!

Resident Staff /Visiting Researchers

Janis Dickinson welcomes Dr. Wally Rendell to Hastings this spring. Wally will work with Janis on a study of the influence of dietary carotinoids on bluebird eggs and nestlings. Janis was named associate editor for two scientific journals- Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology and the Auk. Walter continues his work as editor of an international journal of ornithology, the Condor. David Gubernick continues as the Associate Editor for the Condor. Dr. Joey Haydock, a post-doc with Walter, spent the winter at UC Berkeley and is back in the Red House for the spring field season and to write papers while looking for a position with a university or college. The National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis at UCSB awarded a grant to Mark Stromberg to coordinate a year-long symposium on patterns of change in California grasslands.

Visiting researchers included Prof. Gordon Frankie (UCB) who continues to monitor our native bees and check for potential arrival of Africanized bees. Prof. Jan Shellman-Reeve (Cornell) spent October and No-

vember in the Red House, while studying termites. Jan's study sites are in the Monterey Pine forests of Pebble Beach and nearby sites. Dr. Carla Cicero (UCB-MCZ) visited as part of her ongoing bird studies, and she prepared a wonderful specimen skin of a Stellar's Jay for the outreach box. Dr. Peter Trenham, (EPA) spent nearly 3 weeks in January monitoring our amphibians. Prof. Louise Jackson (UCD) visited several times with students to set up a new long-term study of microbial activity in one soil type where it supports active farmland near Greenfield, restored grasslands here at Hastings and other native perennial grasslands on Hastings and Rana Creek Ranch. Prof. Dick Hemmes (UCD and Vassar) visited his woodrat study site in January.

Classes

Prof. Jim Patton and the UCB mammal class visited Hastings in early October for a few days of trapping and watching mammals (see below). A week earlier, Prof. Jan Randall brought her mammal class (SFSU) for a weekend visit. Both classes had great weather.

Prof. Tom Parker and the plant ecology class from San Francisco State University enjoyed a weekend in early November. They were followed the next week by Phil Rundel from UC-Irvine and his class studying the vegetation of California.. Barry Sinervo's UCSC class in herpetology visited for a day trip.

Dr. Parker returned in the third week of January to lead a group of botanist from across North America who attended the Jepson Herbarium (UCB) course on the genus Manzanita (the shrubs) held at Hastings. This 3-day class was catered and included field trips and indoor microscope work. Slide talks, microscopes and the meal service were all worked out in the Stucco House, with everyone crowding in. On a field trip to Fort Ord, a previously undiscovered species of Manzanita was of great interest to the students.

Dr. Pam Kittelson from Gustavus Adolfus College (MN) visited to set up a class for next year.



Graduate Students

Amy Jess and Yair Chaver, UCB undergraduates, worked from the Stucco House Dec 15 to Jan 15 on deer mice, using the trapping grids set up by David Gubernick. Amy and Yair were doing field work for Karen Nutt, a doctoral student at UCB-IB. Karen visited for a day or so to get Amy and Yair set up.

Sarah Cunningham (UCB-IB), who will be taking over the long-running woodrat study site, spent a few days getting oriented in January and February. Maria Soares (UCB-IB) and her assistant Diego visited several times to capture voles for her ongoing population genetics study.

We have several new graduate students exploring Hastings. Judy Sheen, UCB-IB, is checking out Hastings for a study of the southern alligator lizard. Dan Gluesenkamp, (UCB-IB) spent several days writing and checking out our non-native thistles. John Drew (UCB-ESPM) spent a couple days at Hastings. John is studying the parasites of feral pigs, with Prof. Robert Lane. Mike Bernard, doctoral student at UCD, is looking for tree frogs from Hastings. Yuri Springs (UCSC) is looking at Hastings as a potential doctoral study site on ecology and behavioral changes associated with parasites on local lizards. Kerri Steenwerth, a doctoral student at UCD (Soils, Crop Science) will be spending next winter at Hastings on a study of soil microbial activity in our native and restored perennial grasslands.

Resident doctoral student Alan Krakauer took up residence in Fanny's Cabin off and on during the fall, and full time starting in spring. Alan built three walk-in traps for turkeys and starting putting yellow tags on their wings and radios on their backs.

Field Assistants

Theresa McKensie is still living in the Robertson House and working on Acorn Woodpeckers with Walt Koenig. John Romansic (UCB) joined the woodpecker project in mid-November and stayed through early March. John maintained the amphibian study at Blomquist Pond. In early March, Erica Garcia (UCB) joined Theresa at the Robertson House, working with western bluebirds and Janis Dickinson.

Outreach Program (continued from p. 1)

by students at Pacific Valley Unified School District. Recently revised to meet the California State Standards, "Stoked on Oaks" uses outdoor education and cross-curricular lessons to involve students with trees, plants, and animals commonly found in the local community. Participants will also explore riparian habitats, learning about riparian plants, creek biodiversity and water quality. An optional day can be provided for participants wishing to learn the taxidermy skills required for creating study skins.

Lessons learned during the week include: oak

trees, fire ecology, riparian and oak woodland plants and flowers, animal adaptation, creek insect biodiversity, water quality, and natural selection studies. Workshop recommended for upper elementary through high school teachers. The "local expert" component is especially successful with middle-school students (grades 6-9).

Only 10 openings are available in the class for teachers. Housing, food, and curriculum materials are covered by a grant from UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. First-come, first accepted. A waiting list will be maintained. Contact: Mark Stromberg, Hastings Reserve, 38601 E. Carmel Valley Road, Carmel Valley, CA 93924 (831) 659-2664, stromber@socrates.berkeley.edu

New Bird Box for Classroom Use- HOP

Pat Stadille has now finished a portable box for teachers. Similar to the foot-locker box Pat assembled for mammals, the new box includes about 30 dried skins of local birds, an activities book with curriculum based on state standards. Pat's mammal box has toured schools in Carmel, Pacific Grove, Salinas, and Greenfield, with over 300 students getting a hands-on experience with skulls and skins of foxes, bats, gophers, squirrels, and shrews. Contact Pat Stadille to check out the box for educational uses (pstadill@carmelmiddle.org).

Audubon Society Talk, Art Class, Tea

Janis Dickinson presented her work on western bluebirds to the local Audubon chapter at the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History. A grant Janis obtained allowed Mark Johnson to finish a shed for the pottery work, part of the ongoing Monday afternoon art classes for local children. Hastings staff and students gather now each Thursday at 10 for a social tea and to update each other and visitors are welcome.

Bats of Pinnacles- Amy Fesnock

Amy Fesnock, of the wildlife staff at Pinnacles National Monument, gave a wonderful talk on the Bats of Pinnacles to 140 people at the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History on March 8. Local press covered the talk, cosponsored by Hastings with funding assistance from Helen Johnson. Amy provided some great recordings of the vocalizations of our bats, and these will be added to a new section on our local bats in the Hastings website.

Facilities and Stewardship

The annual Natural Reserve System Management meeting was held at Bodega Bay Marine Lab in October. There, Rudolf Nottrott, was introduced as the new information manager for NRS, hired in collaboration with LTER and NCEAS, and a committee of four NRS reserve directors, including Mark Stromberg. Managing information at reserves, from housing to ecological data sets, will be the focus of this new position and effort by reserve staff. NRS found funds from DANR to augment data management at Hastings, and we will be upgrading our GIS to ArcView, adding a new work station, and obtaining new satellite images of Hastings.

Mark Johnson, the Cachagua Volunteers and CDF staff burned the 6 acres of restored native perennial grasses in a pasture at Oak Ridge Ranch. The fire went very well this year, as conditions were dry and Aaron Lazannof managed the residual biomass well and we had adequate fuel. Of course, Mark was busy with the usual repairs- we had to replace the refrigerator in Fanny's Cabin where Alan has now moved in. Mark finished the restoration of the back bathroom in the



School House- plumbing,, walls, ceiling.

Mark Johnson returned from UCSB's NRS federal surplus yard with the "Camo" truck (photo). Once fixed, it ran for a while, but the transmission cracked and now Mark is waiting for surplus parts. This successor to cranky '65 Ford is not doing very well so far, but we have hopes. Visit the website to see the unfor-

gettable camouflage green...brown, rust- whatever!

A CDF Gabilan prison crew cleared the Arnold Road and cut firewood. Jesse Arnold and his nephew spent a Saturday clearing weeds from the old Arnold Cabin. Our new road surface is holding up quite well, but the rains have been mild.

Feral pigs returned with vigor this winter. We are working with our local warden on a depredation permit and have documented the increased abundance of roto-tilled soil. Oddly, the tillage is mostly along the roads and near the headquarters. A helicopter ride, kindly provided by neighbor Jeff Walter, gave us an opportunity to take some good low-altitude aerial photos to document the presence and abundance of the disturbed areas.

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With the expansion of our newsletter to a new quarterly format and an ever wider distribution, we are asking our readers for contributions to cover the costs of publication.

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--- Five Year (\$20)
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Please make checks payable to "Friends of Hastings" and mail to: Betty Holland, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 3101 Valley Life Science Building, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720

Thank you!