

# CLEAR LAKE HORIZONS



Spring 2009  
C.L.S.P.I.A.

## Why We Live Here ...

It was just after sunrise in late November, a few weeks before the Christmas Bird Count for the county, and I eased into the beach parking lot at Clear Lake State Park to check on the pair of common loons I had been tracking. I hoped that they, along with other birds on my radar, would stay just a few more weeks for the count. I strapped on my binoculars and slung my camera around my neck as I slowly approached the water line. The sun had just broken the crest of the mountains behind Clearlake Oaks so I was looking straight into both the sun and its reflection off the water. Shading my eyes I was still able to see a raft of coots and dozens of ruddy ducks spread across the swim area, as well as two Great Blue Herons just down the shore to my right. No loons, but I waited. I have timed their dives and they are good for at least 30 and sometimes 45 seconds. There, just outside the swim buoy to my left, a loon surfaces with hardly a ripple and luckily out of the direct sunlight. I moved to my left, taking the lens cap off my camera and pressing the "on" button in the hope of getting a photo of the loon before his next dive. That's when it happened. Out of the corner of my vision between the willows, and sitting on the top of an old bleached-out cottonwood snag, were a pair of adult bald eagles. They were to my left at a low angle and couldn't have been in a better light for a good photo. The only problem was the few willow branches blocking my shot. No time to concern myself with composition, just shoot. I started firing photos while slowly closing the distance and positioning myself to get the willow limbs out of the photos. It only took a couple of steps and they dropped from the limb, pulled a couple of power strokes with those massive wings and were gone from sight.

Less than five minutes and my day was a success. If I didn't see another bird all day that would be fine with me. But I had all day and after absorbing the moment I walked to the point right under the old cottonwood snag and then rounded the point to the mouth of "Old Kelsey Creek". With the sun at my back I glassed the willows and cottonwoods down the shoreline toward the mouth of Cole Creek, I saw nothing, but heard a major ruckus behind me. The Great Blue Herons I had seen just minutes before were squawking and I could tell from the change in direction of their squawk that they had taken flight. I could also hear the slapping of the water made by coots as they ran over the surface of the water and flapped their wings to take flight. Right there, right then, I learned a valuable lesson; "listen when Mother Nature talks." Directly over my head at tree top level came an adult Bald Eagle powering her wings hard. Almost imperceptible, except for a lone leg and webbed foot dangling from her talons, was a Ruddy Duck. A little duck, who just minutes before had been happily swimming with his buddies as the sun came up and breathing a sigh of relief when the human on the beach scared the eagles away was now on his way to a tree top somewhere beyond the park visitor center to be breakfast for a Bald Eagle.



As sad as the ending may be, a morning moment like this is why those of you reading this story live in Lake County or wished you did.

Brad Barnwell

For more information regarding the Clear Lake State Park Interpretive Association or about Clear Lake State Park, please visit [www.clearlakestatepark.org](http://www.clearlakestatepark.org)

## A Message from Madelene



Is it possible that Spring is here already? It seems not long ago that the Park was beginning its winter rest, recovering from the busy 2008 season. Time flies quickly and the 2009 season is upon us. The CLSPIA Board is planning and budgeting activities for the year. The Pavilion is on the top of the list as we wait for our contractors, the California Conservation Corp, to arrive, shovels in hand. Our

funds are in place and the contracts in order. It is hard to not be impatient.

We are looking forward to the annual Wildflower Brunch, held on the first day of the Heron Festival, which is April 25th this year. It will be our major fund-raiser for the year and as usual, we are anticipating a hungry crowd to enjoy our 'fill-your-own' omelets served with fruit, pastries and coffee. Be sure to bring your whole family to this unique event.

The Heron Festival and Wildflower Brunch weekend is April 25 & 26. The Park is always 'dressed for company' in spring green, and the wildflowers are at their best (we hope). The birds are active and the Pond Turtles are basking on logs. The trees and bushes have fresh, shiny leaves and the ferns look absolutely beautiful. Come to the festival both days to enjoy the whole Park.

The Visitor Center will be open on weekends, starting April 18th, and will continue through the Labor Day weekend. There are so many nice gift items available there, all nature related, beside the interesting displays in the museum. It is a great place to bring out-of-town visitors. Our volunteers are busy throughout the spring, summer and fall. We invite you to come to the Park as a volunteer. It may be the best thing you have done in a long time.

Madelene

## A New Star

Leona Butts became the newest Star of the CLSPIA Board recently when she was honored for her work on behalf of the environment at the Lake County Stars Award Dinner held at Konocti Harbor Resort. Leona has served on the Park Board for many years. She is responsible for the Park's excellent Docent Handbook and has been instrumental in keeping local folks informed about programs, hikes and events, which take place at the Park through articles published in the Record Bee. She often gives wildlife and bird-centered educational programs for school children and patrons of County celebrations such as Heron Days, and other nature oriented celebrations. Leona is also generous in giving her time to the causes of the Audubon Society and serves as an Audubon Activist.



Leona was the leader and prime mover of Lake County's successful massive signature gathering effort working to inform State Government and Governor Schwarzenegger of the importance of California State Parks and the need to keep them open despite budget cuts.

Leona has made a big difference in the level of environmental awareness in Lake County. Congratulations, Leona!

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**Clear Lake State  
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**Val Nixon - Advisor to the Board**

# Ranger's Report



Spring is here and the busy season is already upon us. The Park is beginning to bloom with wildflowers and very green grass and trees. Wildlife is active throughout the Park. We had a great Hitch run this year in Cole and Kelsey Creeks. The Park's Osprey and Herons seemed excited as they gorged on the great

abundance of protein. The approaching summer will certainly bring the Park more visitors, more activities and warmer days.

A little update on what's going on in the Park; the re-lining of the 100,000-gallon water tank that supplies our water has been completed. We will be paving the main road through the Park and the main parking lot this spring. A new project that may get going in the spring and continue into summer is the installation of a group of eight cabins, which will be placed near the

campfire area. These cabins will be available to visitors through the reservation system.

The Park's newest ranger, Brian Ratledge, is nearly finished with his field training. He will be patrolling the Park during the summer. The kiosk and its staff are getting ready for the busy season. You may have found the kiosk vacant early this spring. This was necessary due to budget considerations. Fees are still being collected by self-payment. We like to call the self-pay station the "iron ranger". Most visitors have complied with the payment system, but there are always a few who receive a warning or citation for their lack of understanding the rules.

We are looking forward to the Heron Festival and Wildflower Brunch on April 25th and 26th. It is a great event and a chance to see native birds, to check out the great booths, and to support the Park. I will be making om-elets at the brunch on the 25th and look forward to seeing you all there.

Ryen Goering  
Supervising Ranger



## SAY "HELLO" TO RANGER BRIAN

Let's all give a hearty welcome to Ranger Brian Ratledge who has recently joined the staff at Clear Lake State Park. Brian calls Fountain Valley in Orange County his home and holds a B.A. from U.C. Santa Barbara. Volleyball is a favorite sport along with surfing and board sports. He says he enjoys a slower pace of life and likes the clear air and natural environment of Lake County. We hope he will enjoy his new career as a Park Ranger. Welcome Brian!

[www.clearlakestatepark.org](http://www.clearlakestatepark.org) is Up and Rolling

CSPIA web master, Verna Schaffer, has announced that the new Park site is up and working well. The new site gives a comprehensive view of the Park and answers questions about Park facilities and activities. Photos taken by visitors and CLSPIA Board members show the beauties of the Park. Information about events, camping, hiking and picnicking, boating, kayaking and swimming, the interpretive center, Jr. Ranger Program and school field trips are included. The site will be continually updated to give current usable information to viewers.



# **Board Actions**

## **December 2008**

- Learned from Superintendent Jay that the Pavilion contract would be signed during the next week.
- Noted that the sewer project is nearly complete and the fish station is ready for use.
- Noted that Fish and Game has a patrol boat working from the Park.
- Learned that an additional ranger will finish his training at the Park during February, 2009.
- Noted that Leona will continue submitting Park articles to local papers without assuming the publicity chair.
- Noted that the VC store will hold the annual Christmas sale on Saturday the 14th with all inventory at a 25% discount and will be closed during January and February of '09.
- Decided that walks would be held on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month.
- Learned that the Dickens Fair realized sales of \$886.00 and some donations.
- Noted the donation of \$146.00 from the battery round up.
- Noted that the Website Committee and Verna would meet a second time to review and update our site [www.clearlakestatepark.org](http://www.clearlakestatepark.org).
- Voted to fund an Interpretive Specialist position for Elaine Mansell to administer school group programs and Junior Rangers in 2009 at a sum of up to \$2,000.
- Learned that Park Advocacy Day will be held March 23rd 2009.
- Learned that Glenn will continue serving on the Board following his retirement until his replacement is appointed.
- Decided that the annual budget meeting will be held prior to the January 8th Board meeting.

## **The Board did not meet in January 2009**

## **February 2009**

- Reviewed the financial and year-end report submitted by Treasurer, Burl
- Learned that \$107,000.000 had been transferred to the State fund established for the pavilion.
- Noted that the CLSPIA checking account was at \$28,000.00 and the pavilion account nearly \$10,000.00 remaining.
- Learned that cuts are being made to the maintenance staff and park aides in addition to the deferral of one ranger position.
- Noted that there was the possibility of the installation of "hook ups" in a few campsites in addition to some cabins if "stimulus" funds become available.
- Learned that the group camping area may be discontinued or moved.
- Noted that memberships are only trickling in. Membership Chair, Bobbi Towne will write and send a membership encouragement letter to those who have not yet renewed.
- Learned that Lisa will open the VC shop in April.
- Noted that photos for the newsletter should be emailed to Nancy as well as to Verna.
- Voted to pay Verna \$500.00 for her work on the web site and an additional \$50.00 for maintenance and quarterly updates.
- Decided on March 14th (1-3 pm.) as the Annual Meeting date with Bob Keiffer as speaker. Board members will bring snacks.
- Requested that Burl inquire if Stephen Stetzer would be interested in a Board position.
- Noted that Board elections would include Lisa Calkins, Bobbi Towne, Cathy Hall, Sandy Moura, Brad Barnwell and one new member to replace retiring Glenn Smith.
- Decided that the price of the Wildflower Breakfast would be \$15.00 per person. Biodegradable utensils would be considered.
- Learned that the next CALPA Conference would be held May 14-17 in Santa Cruz.
- Thanked Thelma Dangel for the original picture of the opening of the Visitor Center.
- Declined to submit a Wine Alliance application.

**(Board Actions, continued on page 5.)**

## Coming Soon -- The Wildflower Brunch & Heron Festival

Be sure to attend the annual Heron Festival at the Park on April 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. No other event showcases the natural beauty of Lake County so well. Clear Lake State Park Interpretive Association (CLSPIA) and Redbud Audubon Society present this weekend filled with nature related activities. The work of the two groups intermingles and the proceeds from the event stay in the community to further environmental education. Park entrance and all activities are free except the Wildflower Brunch and pontoon boat rides.

The Wildflower Brunch, served Saturday only, from 9:00 until noon, is prepared by CLSPIA members and is well known for its "fill-your-own" omelets accompanied by pastries, fruit and coffee. The cost is \$15.00 per person and reservations are requested.



You can take advantage of this once a year opportunity to reserve a pontoon boat ride featuring close-up views of lake and shore line

birds. Each ninety minute tour, offered Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m., will have an expert bird guide aboard. The cost is \$15.00 per person. Reservations are required.

This fun-filled, family oriented weekend features birding and nature walks, exhibits, vendor booths, music, and children's activities. The Park Visitor Center will be open from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. both

days. You can visit the museum and gift shop and attend nature programs in the auditorium.



Saturday keynote speaker, at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., will be Philip Green, internationally known photographer of herons and egrets. Dr. Harry Lyons will present "Myths and Music of Clear Lake" at 10:00 a.m. Sunday morning. Dr. Lyons offers an entertaining program that mixes biology, music and humor to tell the story of Clear Lake. Not to be missed is a live raptor tent show presented at 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Sunday.

To make reservations and see a full schedule of activities and speakers, visit [www.heronfestival.org](http://www.heronfestival.org) or phone (800) 525-3743.

Leona Butts



**(Board Actions, continued from page 4.)**

### March 2009

- Agreed that CLSPIA income should approximately match expenditures.
- Decided on one interpretive position classification that would incorporate money for salaries of one or more interpretive specialists that might be funded this year. The amount for this item is \$7250.00.
- Agreed to keep the budget item for Jr. Ranger Program supplies at \$300.00.
- Approved the 2009 budget plan as amended above.
- Voted to move \$15,000.00 from checking to savings account.
- Learned that Superintendent, Jay Sherman was on medical leave for an indefinite length of time. Ranger Ryan will assume additional duties.
- Extended congratulations to Ranger Ryen and his wife Meredith who expect their first child in August.
- Discussed new and returning items to be sold in the VC store.
- Noted that the Thrivent application has been completed.
- Planned the Annual Meeting, Saturday, March 14th. Bob Keiffer will receive a \$200.00 honorarium for his Ivory-billed Woodpecker presentation.

## Visitor Center Store Opens April 18<sup>th</sup> Saturdays and Sundays 10 to 4

It is always exciting when the Visitor Center gift shop opens for a new season. There are many new items. This year there is one especially for babies — onesies. They are great quality and should be the answer to requests from proud parents and grandparents. In infant sizing with the Park name on the back, these onesies make great souvenirs for visitors to take home, and are wonderful gifts for our own grandchildren. We also have many new items from the State Park store including beach towels and aluminum water bottles. To celebrate the Heron Festival and Wildflower Brunch, coming up soon, I've ordered some beautiful wildflower tee shirts. Also, for the guys, some rather unique Bass tee shirts, which will be available at a great price. More interesting items will arrive during the later spring and summer so keep checking the store. And, don't miss the Book Sale at the Visitor Center the weekend of April 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. Volunteers, the calendar is waiting for your sign ups. We're looking forward to a busy spring and summer! See you all at the Park.



Lisa Calkins

### AN OLD FRIEND RETIRES FROM THE BOARD



Glenn Smith who became a Director on the CLSPIA Board nearly twenty years ago, has seen many changes and improvements in the Park. He has always been the person to ask when it came to questions about wildflowers, trees and the plant life of the Park. He produced plant inventories which were sold to curious campers and visitors and always got the scientific names correct. He will be best remembered as a cheerful interesting leader of nature hikes. Campers, visitors, members of CLSPIA, and staff will miss talking to Glenn. However, we do hope he will return to lead some Sunday hikes in the Park.

All together now - "Thank you Glenn for your devoted service to Clear Lake State Park."

### STEPHEN STETZER JOINS CLSPIA BOARD

CLSPIA is happy to announce that Stephen Stetzer of Riviera Heights has joined the Board and will serve in the place of retired member Glenn Smith.

Since moving to Lake County, Stephen has served as a volunteer for the Red Cross, holding membership on local and State Councils and has volunteered with Soper-Reese. Before retiring, Stephen represented OPV Software and brings a wealth of computer and printing experience to CLSPIA. Stephen enjoys walking in the Park for exercise and recreation. He has been printer of this newsletter for several years.

Welcome, Stephen



## *New DVD's for the Visitor Center*

So many campers and local folks have enjoyed the Park's Saturday DVD programs that CLSPIA decided it was time to invest in some new DVD programs. The first of these will be shown on April 18th at 1:00 pm. in the visitor Center. It is called "Bees: Tales from the Hive". Here is my short review of this program.

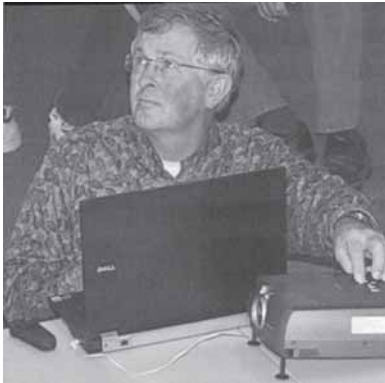
### *Bees: Tales from the Hive*

It takes 5 million flowers to make one pint of honey. Nature must have bees to fertilize flowers by spreading pollen. Amazing facts and absolutely amazing photography fill this DVD by Nova. I have no idea how videographers got this close up footage of a honey-bee colony and the lives within the hive. This is a truly spectacular portrayal of a working bee colony. After watching this, I know why they are called "worker bees". Did you know that the male bee doesn't work? Just the females are workers. Within the colony, every bee has a specific task but they work together to protect the colony. This DVD explains much of bee behavior that we have always accepted but never understood.

Definitely, don't miss this first showing of Bees on April 18th.

Lisa Calkins.

## **THE 2009 ANNUAL MEETING**



Bob Keiffer at work.

Over 40 CLSPIA members and friends gathered on March 14<sup>th</sup> to hear about the past, present, and future plans of the Clear Lake Interpretive Association in our quest to enhance interpretation of the natural beauties of the Park with special continuing interest in seeing that "no child left inside".

Sweet and savory nibblies gave us time to greet old and new friends. Board members were introduced by President Madelene Lyon. The Park's newest ranger Brian Ratledge was introduced. Madelene reported that Ranger Ryen Goering will be the acting supervising ranger, as Jay Sherman is now on medical leave.

Madelene announced that all details for the Education Pavilion are complete, and we are waiting for a construction date.

Glenn Smith, CLSPIA Board member with greatest seniority, has decided to "retire". He will continue leading walks. Glen was thanked for his long service to the Park and was presented with a lovely wild-flower book and a gift certificate from a local restaurant.

Bob Keiffer was on hand to tell about his adventures searching for the elusive (if existent) Ivory Billed Woodpecker. With the help of great photography, we were able to "see" this illusive bird ...or was it something else? Perhaps by next year there will be a positive identification of this huge, handsome woodpecker. Thank you, Bob. It was a real mystery story.

Don't wait for next year's Annual Meeting to spend time in your Park. So much is happening. This is the season for the babies to arrive, and you may see newborn turtles, quail, ducks, turkeys and deer. During summer we'll even have a baby ranger...Congratulations Ryen and Meredith!

Bobbi Towne



Glenn Smith

