

CVPA Newsletter

QUARTERLY No. 25

APRIL, 1997

SPRING RETURNS TO CUMMINGS VALLEY

With the arrival of the vernal equinox last month, spring officially returned to Cummings Valley. You don't really need a calendar to tell when winter is over, however. Just look around.

The earliest sign of the changing season is tinge of green that appears on the hillsides-particularly those with a south-facing orientation, which receive more sunlight and thus are the first to start greening. Sadly, most of the grasses that are now visible in the foothills and valley floor are not natives – they have replaced the perennial bunch grasses that once covered the open areas. Those now present, such as foxtail and ripgut brome, are the legacy of years of over-grazing in the last century. Large herds of cattle, sheep, and goats (even pigs) once free-ranged these mountains, and their continuous grazing pressure proved more than even the resilient bunch grasses could withstand.

In their place came the non-natives mentioned earlier. These grasses are mostly annuals, and practice drought avoidance: as soon as the rains stop, they quickly make seed and die, trusting the wind and animals to scatter their seed. The original seeds are believed to have been introduced unknowingly in the hair or wool of livestock and in imported grain seed.

As soon as the weather begins to warm even slightly, signaling that the worst of winter is over and spring is near, buckeye trees begin to leaf out. These small, pale-barked trees are found mostly on the south side of Cummings Valley, in Stallion Springs, and on Cummings Mountain. My grandfather, a shepherd who first came through Tehachapi in 1998, used to say that buckeyes were the first trees to turn green early in the new year and later were the first to turn brown. Casual observation proves him right. Two years ago, out-of-town seniors who were visiting Stallion Springs as part of a summer Elderhostel program in August asked me

why all the oak trees on a hillside south of Boomtown were dying. They were actually seeing buckeyes that were already going dormant. Buckeyes are easy to spot with their particularly brilliant shades of green.

The oaks are also starting to show a little color after several skeletal months, but unlike the buckeyes, their early color is more yellow or very pale green. Look for the catkins to appear soon-these are part of the oaks' flowering organs and the degree of their pollination success will determine the size of next fall's acorn crop.

Wildflowers have begun to appear as well, though this doesn't look to be a bumper year for wildflowers - the rains quit too early. Other factors undoubtedly influenced this year's small displays. I always smile to myself when I hear people in December forecasting a good wildflower year because of "all the rain we've been having." Wildflowers apparently abide by the old entertainment maxim that "Timing is everything", because early rains don't do them much good if we have a dry spring - which has certainly been the case this year. Soil temperature, air temperature, sunlight, and other factors also determine the size of each year's wildflower show.

Wildflowers that are now appearing include California poppies, fiddleneck, lupines, owl's clover, filaree, goldfields, four o'clocks, baby blue eyes, and a few others. It's still too early to tell if there will be much farewell-to-spring. As its name implies, this pinkish-lavender wildflower marks the changing of another season when cool, breezy spring days give way to the heat of California's interior summers. The slopes above Cummings Valley were carpeted with farewell-to-spring two years ago.

Look around you and enjoy spring in the mountains, but don't wait too long; it is a beautiful but ephemeral time of year.

Jon Hammond

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CUMMINGS VALLEY PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION

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ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

Last summer CVPA sent a letter to Craig Pope, Director of Kern County Transportation Management, recommending a program for road shoulder management to control Yellow Starthistle and other weeds. The program was designed to also improve the appearance and stability of the dirt shoulders.

We asked for a response, but after several months with none forthcoming we asked Supervisor Steve Perez if he would convene a meeting with Transportation Management and CVPA. He did convene a meeting at his Tehachapi office which was attended by himself, Craig Pope and Andy Richter of Transportation Management, Jason Caudle, Steve Perez's Tehachapi representative, Joe Fontaine and Chuck McCollough of CVPA and David Aranda, Stallion Springs CSD Manager who has initiated a similar road berm management program.

The upshot of the meeting was that Transportation Management is reluctant to change their road shoulder program, but would be willing to let CVPA do a pilot program to see how the proposed management scheme works. They agreed to put up signs designating the pilot stretch of road and Supervisor Steve Perez agreed to pay for them. Now it is up to us to follow through.

While we had their attention we brought up two other road problems. About three years ago we wrote to the road people requesting that they cut back the bank on the south side of Cummings Valley Road at the S-curve approach to Highway 202 to improve visibility and reduce the accident hazard. We never got any response, so we brought it up again at the meeting along with the flooding problem on Cummings Valley Road east of Bailey Road. Messrs Pope and Richter left the meeting to go out and look at the two problems.

The bank at the Cummings Valley Road approach to Highway 202 has been cut back with a vast improvement in visibility. Unfortunately they don't think there is anything to be done to solve the flooding problem. CVPA will continue to study the problem to see if we can recommend a solution.

It is certainly gratifying that Steve Perez took time from his busy schedule to arrange the meeting and offer the prestige of his office to help us with problems that are important to us even if small in the scale of things he must deal with.

COLOR CHOICES

Kudos to John Yeakley, BVS CSD Manager, for his thoughtfulness in inviting CVPA to choose the colors for the 400,000 gallon water tank and three pump houses that are part of the new BVS system supplying water to Bear Valley Springs residents from wells in Cummings Valley.

A major constraint on the tank color was that it must be a light color that will reflect the sun's heat to avoid heating the water and also lessen paint deterioration.

Several members of the CVPA Board and Board Advisory Committee met in the field on a Sunday morning to view the

tank and paint color charts. The choice was a kind of beige with a hint of green which we hope will harmonize with the background and other structures in that part of the valley such as the school and the school water tank. The pump house at the tank was recommended to be the same color as the tank while the two well housings along Cummings Valley Road will be appropriate earth tones.

NOMINEES FOR CVPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At the upcoming Annual Meeting on June 5 we will elect officers for the 1997-1998 term. The first of the good news is that Joe Fontaine has agreed to serve a second term as president. Jo Anne Huckins has agreed to step into the vice president slot since current vice president, Al Sanbrano, has chosen to take over treasurer duties to upgrade our financial record keeping on computer. More good news -Gen Swingle will stand in nomination for recording secretary, and Ben Rude will take over corresponding secretary duties from wife, Laurie.

We want to thank Ann Miller, Laurie Rude and Carol Wein for their many years of service on the Board in various positions. We hope to keep them on the Board Advisory Committee.

Any member wishing to place other names in nomination for any office may call Ben Rude at 821-1904 or Chuck McCollough at 822-3478. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor at the Annual Meeting on June 5.

JUNE MEETING

As reported in the last newsletter we will hold this meeting in Jon Hammond's old barn at his Linda Vista Ranch. Following the business meeting and election of officers we will be entertained with a musical program by Jon and perhaps some of his musical friends. This will be a time to socialize and get to know other CVPA members over coffee and snacks.

To get to the ranch on Cherry Lane turn south off Hwy 202 onto Sage Lane (by the Old Town Buffet - formerly The Sizzler). At the end of Sage Lane turn east on Cherry Lane and go about 3/8 mile and look for signs giving directions for parking.

CCI EXPANSION STUDY

With regard to the expansion study, we have received a response from Dr. Nyberg from CSU Bakersfield. Dr. Nyberg referred our solicitation to professors Sechrest and Shichor of Cal State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) who have done similar studies in their Criminal Justice Department. The professors from CSUSB called us and expressed a desire to secure an additional grant amount to supplement the CVPA grant. For the present, we will pursue this project with CSUSB since our other prospects have not responded to date.

APRIL 3 MEETING

If you didn't attend this meeting, you missed another good one. Barry Marlett, Kern County Ag. Dept. District Biologist and student of Native American cultures, presented a fascinating view of lifestyles of the Kawaiisu Indians who inhabited Cummings and Brite Valleys as well as the rest of the Tehachapi area during part of the year.

Surprising to many of us is that they spent the winters in the cold Tehachapi area instead of going to some nice warm place like Palm Springs. Why? Because the major winter food source was acorns which they gathered in huge non-transportable quantities in the fall and stored to eat all winter. Numerous bedrock mortars around the rocky margins of our valleys attest to the effort of grinding the acorns which were then leached to remove the bitter tannins.

Along with slides of many local bedrock mortars were slides of other evidences of Kawaiisu campsites and cooking hearths, especially in desert areas where they spent most of the rest of the year.

Discussion of various types of arrowheads and dart points, other tools and grinding implements such as mortars and pestles, and matates and manos was brought to life with slides and a table display of actual artifacts.

We thank Barry for a most interesting presentation

PARTNERSHIP WITH CUMMINGS VALLEY SCHOOL

Enrichment programs.

If you have a special skill, talent or area of knowledge, or if you just like helping kids learn, call Carol Wein at 821-1819. She will coordinate with Principal, Roger Halberg, to see if you can spend an hour or several hours giving students the benefit of your expertise.

Native Plant Garden Cleanup

The trees and shrubs we planted last year in front of the school are in need of weeding and other help. Please bring garden tools, weed eaters and lawnmowers to help us beautify this area at 9:00 AM Monday April 21. For more information call Carol at 821-1819.

CVPA HISTORICAL BUS TOUR

Saturday, June 21 should be an ideal time of year for the third CVPA bus tour of Cummings and Brite Valleys. Previous tours were very popular as they gave participants an opportunity to know these unique valleys better and to learn about the history, wildlife, agriculture and geology.

Some attractions this year include the original Cummings Ranch, the Banducci Ranch and old Banducci road, the Brite Valley marble quarry, the Brite Victorian house and nearby site of the sulfur springs hotel, the Tehachapi Ostrich Ranch and other points of interest.

Invited to provide running narratives are Jerrie Cowan, curator of the Tehachapi Museum; Jon Hammond, local writer, historian, and naturalist and Chuck McCollough, geologist.

The tour will be conducted in a modern comfortable air conditioned tour bus at a cost of \$8 for CVPA members and \$10 for non-members. The two tours will be offered at 9:00 and 11:30 AM. Reservations should be made by sending your check made out to CVPA to Laurie Rude, 26701 Frontier Way, Tehachapi, CA 93561.

Please indicate on your check or on a note which tour you prefer -first, second or N.P. for no preference. Preferences will be honored as reservations are received until one or the other tour is filled. Those received after that will be assigned to the tour still open. Checks received after both tours are full will be held until the day of the tour in case there are cancellations. You will be called prior to June 21 to confirm which tour you are on or if you are on the standby list.

So get your reservations in early, but no later than June 15. For information call Laurie at 821-1904.

MORE GARB FROM THE TRASH LADY

It sometimes whizzes by us as we're out for a leisurely stroll. Sometimes it crackles incongruously beneath our feet as we attempt to walk through the grass. The sound of a plastic bag filled with wind cackles obscenely as it flails, impaled upon the wooden fencepost. An empty, long-since-used soda can clatters across the road, caught up in a sudden gust of wind.

Gum wrappers, cigarette butts and containers, candy wrappers, unpaired socks, hangers; bloodied bandages, fast food wrappers, unopened straws, pieces from an unfinished puzzle, styrofoam cups and packaging -- and even an occasional dollar bill --- have become an accustomed part of most peoples everyday environments.

If you are troubled by it as I still am, please join us on Saturday, May 31, at the Old School House on Pellisier Road in Cummings Valley for a valiant and ongoing effort to keep our beautiful rural area -- still beautiful!

We will meet as a group at 10:00 Am. for trash bags, gloves, and vests. We will have our very creative Burma Shave-type signs out and about Cummings Valley. If you are an early riser and want to begin earlier, please feel free to come as early as 8:00 Am. -- the supplies will all be out there; please designate on the provided Master Map (you will see it) which areas you will be covering so we will not repeat it at 10:00 --and leave us with your name for credit, as well.

At 12:30, we will re-meet at the Old School House for sandwiches and refreshment. Please join us for this more enjoyable portion of trash gathering. I will need to know how much of what to buy so you must RSVP! Please let me know if you will be there. The weather should be great!

I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU
-- SOOOOOON !! Carol D. Wein 821-1819

CVPA Newsletter

Cummings Valley Protective Association
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CVPA NEWSLETTER

SAFE 1 MEMBERSHIP

The CVPA Board approved a plan to invest some of the organization's funds in a Certificate of Deposit with the Safe 1 Credit Union. Accordingly, a petition on behalf of the CVPA was submitted requesting membership in the

credit union. We have been informed that the CVPA was approved for membership allowing us to invest in the credit union. As part of this approval, all the members of the CVPA are eligible to avail themselves of the services of the Safel Credit Union. Drop in at the local office and identify yourself by showing your CVPA membership card.

CVPA MEMBERSHIP

Although this is late in the membership year, we are eagerly looking forward to some of our most significant events.

Renew your membership and join us for the Yellow Starthistle eradication (April 5), Trash pickup (May 31), annual meeting and election of new officers and Jon Hammond musical program (June), Bus tour (June 21).

According to our records approximately 78 paid members in 1995-1996 forgot to renew for 1996-1997. If you are one of those, please join us now It's not too late!

Yes, we (I) want to continue to support CVPA!

Enclosed is our (my) \$12.00 dues for July 1, 1996 through June 1997 membership year, or better yet, enclosed is \$24.00 which will carry through June 1998.

Name (s) _____

Address changes? _____

Mail to:

Cummings Valley Protective Association
c/o Al Sanbrano, Membership Chairman
30341 Horsethief Dr.
Tehachapi, Ca 93561