



Pinnacles Partnership Voice

Dawning of a new Decade

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Looking back: A pictorial review of 2009

December 31, 2009 marked the end of year three for Pinnacles Partnership along with the close of the first decade of the 21st Century! As is traditional for New Year's Day, we will begin by reflecting on what we achieved last year...



(How many of the activities above can you identify? Answers to follow.)

(Row 1, Picture 1): In March of 2009, the Paicines Clover 4-H Club became "Weed Warriors" for the day. The Weed Warrior program is part of the joint project between Pinnacles National Monument ("PINN") and Pinnacles Partnership ("PIPA") designed to eradicate invasive non-native plants in the Campground. Special thanks to the California Alpine Club who donated \$1,000 in 2009 to support the Campground Restoration Program.

(Row 1, Pictures 2-3): Also in March of 2009, Condor Biologists discovered that two first-time parents, Condors 303 (female released by Ventana Wildlife Society) and 313 (male released by PINN) had produced an egg in a high cave located on the RS Bar Guest Ranch in San Benito County. In order to test the wild-laid egg for contaminants, biologists rappelled into the birds' cliff nest on April 17, 2009 and traded the egg for one

produced at the Los Angeles Zoo. The egg hatched a day later and has since been named Condor 514. Condor 514 fledged in mid-October, but will remain close to the nest site until he is old enough to forge for himself. Sadly, Condor 303 (female parent) recently died in the late fall of 2009, but Condor 313 (male parent) continues to tend to the fledgling. Special thanks to Jason Bumann, Ranch Manager, and the operating entity of the RS Bar Guest Ranch for their ongoing cooperation with the Condor Recovery Team.

(Row 1, Picture 4): John Mark Maio, shown on location in this picture, is a director, writer and composer of film and video productions. John and his company, Creative Adventures, have been producing documentaries, educational programs and narrative films since 1988. In the spring of 2009, John produced a short video piece for Pinnacles Partnership documenting the collaboration between private and public entities involved in monitoring the progress of wild-hatched Condor 514. In recognition of John's contributions to PIPA and the California Condor Recovery Project, he was our "honoree" at the 9th annual Philanthropy Day Luncheon hosted by the Community Foundation of San Benito County in November 2009.

(Row 2, Pictures 1-3): In 2009, PIPA launched a pilot outdoor educational program emphasizing the California state science and art standards we dubbed, "Camp Pinnacles." The program was tailored for the rural schools in San Benito County. In April 2009, Tres Pinos teachers Susan Carpenter and Rene Hodges brought their classes (4th - 6th grades) to PINN for the day. Ranger Michael Rupp whisked the 5th and 6th grade students off the arriving bus for a hike highlighting the geological aspects of the Pinnacles ecosystem. Ranger Gavin Emmons led the 4th grade students on a separate hike to discuss the food web in the Pinnacles ecosystem. In the afternoon, Tres Pinos art teacher, Jennifer Rodriguez, mesmerized the entire group (students and teachers alike) teaching techniques for drawing one of the park's indigenous oak trees.

(Row 2, Picture 4 and Row 3, Pictures 1-4): In May 2009, every student from Jefferson, Bitterwater-Tully and Panoche elementary schools (kindergarten through 8th grades) participated in the 2nd pilot of the Camp Pinnacles Program. This 2 day, 1 night program contained sessions incorporating science standards at each grade level and included topics as diverse as echolocation, cellular biology and astronomy. Throughout the program, artist Leitha Thrall helped students develop a mural highlighting the key points covered in each session. For the grand finale and to the delight of all, each grade level presented a brief "production" in the amphitheatre summarizing their experience at Camp Pinnacles. PIPA volunteers and participating rural school principals are currently planning the 2010 Camp Pinnacles scheduled for June 3 and 4th. For more information, e-mail info@pinnaclespartnership.org.

(Row 4, Pictures 1 and 2): In June 2009, PIPA hosted its 3rd Annual Members Picnic at the RS Bar Guest Ranch. An estimated 150 members and friends attended throughout the day. PINN and PIPA volunteers and staff gave demonstrations about the condor recovery project, the area's plant and bird communities, watercolor painting and geology. Geologist Phil Stoffer even discovered a rocky outcropping adjacent to the picnic area that was stuffed with marine fossils! More than 60 visitors took the Jeep excursions to view the nest site in hopes of viewing the wild-hatched condor and/or its parents. (Visitors on the later Jeep rides were blessed in this regard as the parents returned to the nest for feeding late in the day). Fifty-five people remained for dinner, and many of them heroically trekked through a dark field long after sunset where local astronomers, invited by PIPA board member David Baumgartner, trained their telescopes on the wonders of the night skies.

(Row 4, Picture 3): On what turned out to be the hottest day of 2009, PINN held its 6th public release of juvenile condors in September. This photo shows instructor Mary Maio and students from the San Benito High School advanced multi-media class taking footage for their CA condor public service announcements.

(Row 4, Picture 4): Despite the gloomy economy, the 2nd Annual Condor Classic in October 2009 attracted the same number of bicyclists to San Benito County as did the inaugural event in 2008. The October 2009 ride started and ended at Windhaven Ranch in San Juan Bautista. In a beautiful garden setting complete with strolling peacocks, returning cyclists enjoyed a scrumptious BBQ, visited with friends and compared their "wing-span" to that of a California condor. Registration records indicate that most of the riders came from the Bay Area counties, but there were also riders from Texas, Missouri, Kansas and Singapore. PIPA was the beneficiary of the 2009 event and received net proceeds in the amount of \$8,094.77. Special thanks to local designer Kathy Schipper, the San Benito Chamber of Commerce and the many who served on the Condor Classic Committee for this wonderful annual event showcasing the beauty of San Benito County and providing much needed financial support for PIPA!

Looking Ahead to 2010

Predictions are also traditional for New Years Day. PINN Superintendent Eric Brunneemann shares these exciting predictions for 2010...

- An official announcement will be made early this year concerning congressional approval of a boundary adjustment adding approximately 111 acres of chaparral habitat along the west side of Hwy 25 at the eastern entrance to PINN.
- PINN will also acquire (from Jefferson School District) the old Bear Valley School (by spring?) and will begin restoration of the bell tower soon thereafter. Bear Valley School, founded in 1874, served the first settlers of the gateway community on the east side of PINN. Between 1874 and 1952 the Bear Valley School graduated an estimated 500 students, a number of whom still reside in San Benito County. In 1952, Bear Valley School and Jefferson School districts merged. Following the merger, the old BVS building was used as a community center, where residents voted in state and county elections; attended Farm Bureau, 4-H and Home Department meetings; and enjoyed card parties, family gatherings and reunions. The trustees of the Jefferson School district closed the Bear Valley School to the public in about 2002. For more information concerning the history of BVS, see www.bearvalleyschool.com.
- Financing for a new West Side Visitor Center will be approved in 2010; construction will begin as early as this fall.
- More baby condors will be hatched in the wild!

PAN AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP IN CONDOR RECOVERY



Jim Petterson (PINN Biologist), Carolina Garguilo (center) and Jan Shriner (PIPA Board Member)

Carolina Garguilo, PhD candidate studying Andean Condors in three national parks in Argentina arrived on November 10, 2009 and will be in California through January 31, 2010 as part of the Pan American Partnership condor biologist exchange! This is Carolina's first time in the United States and since her arrival she has traveled to the Grand Canyon National Park for a condor educator's workshop, visited the nest site on the RS Bar Guest Ranch, worked alongside Pinnacles biologists in most aspects of

day to day operation, and attended a meeting of all field teams (Arizona, Baja California, Southern California, Big Sur and Pinnacles) hosted by the San Diego Wild Animal Park. Carolina's speaking schedule includes presentations to the San Juan Bautista and Morgan Hill Rotary Club as well as the Hollister Dual Language Academy.

The long awaited signing of the sister park agreement between the National Park Service and Argentina National Park is scheduled for January 15, 2010 in Washington D.C. The germinating idea for the sister park agreement began in 2007 when the San Juan Bautista Rotary Club, participating in a Rotary exchange program, sent PINN's Denise Louie to Argentina. During her brief tour, Denise learned of the condor recovery efforts underway in Argentina's national park system. In September 2008, Denise returned to Argentina—this time with a team from PINN—specifically to explore a sister park relationship with Parque Nacional Quebrada del Condorito. (It was during this initial outreach effort that the PINN team met Carolina). NPS Director Jon Jarvis, and Argentina National Park Director Dr. Patricia Gandini will be formalizing the agreement allowing the exchange of ideas and techniques used by biologists in each country for condor recovery and preservation. PINN Superintendent Eric Brunnemann and PIPA board members David Cole and Jan Shriner plan to attend the signing ceremony. The Pan American Partnership biologist exchange project is made possible through support from Pinnacles Partnership (www.pinnaclespartnership.org), San Juan Bautista Rotary, the American Conservation Experience (<http://usaconservation.org/>) and the National Park Service.

Pinnacles Partnership Newsletter, Historical Installment No. 8

Timothy Babalis, Historian, National Park Service

The Ben Bacon Ranch Historic District, Part II: The Earliest Inhabitants

In my last article, I discussed the creation of the Ben Bacon Ranch Historic District, which was formally established on July 13, 2009. Now I'd like to describe some of the history behind this ranch and the ancient landscape it occupies in order to explain why it was determined to be a significant cultural resource for Pinnacles National Monument. This story includes not only the Bacon family itself but also the Ohlone Indians who preceded these American settlers.

The Ben Bacon Ranch lies in the region of the monument now commonly called The Bottomlands, which extends from the park entrance at Highway 25 to the Chalone Bench, just below the Pinnacles Campground. But The Bottomlands represent only the southern-most quarter of Bear Valley, an eight mile long crescent of fertile land which begins on the Melendy Ranch at its northern end and continues south to the Ben Bacon Ranch at its southern. There is no natural boundary separating The Bottomlands from the rest of Bear Valley, though Highway 25 has formed a sort of artificial boundary since the mid-1890s. (Highway 25 also represents the historic boundary of the Ben Bacon Ranch and the present boundary of Pinnacles National Monument.) Bear Valley is the drainage of Sandy Creek, which originates in the ridges of the Gabilan Mountains east of the valley and flows south to eventually join Chalone Creek just below the Chalone Bench. Although Sandy Creek actually *flows* only during the wetter months of the year, the water table below most of Bear Valley remains relatively close to the surface all year long, making it possible to practice ranching and some limited forms of agriculture in an otherwise forbiddingly-dry environment. There is reason to believe that the water table once stood even higher during the mid-nineteenth century, since early accounts from American settlers (like the Bacons and their relatives) describe springs and marshy areas where ground water seeped to the surface of the landscape and may have sustained a lusher vegetation than exists today.

The Bacon family was among the first generation of homesteaders to permanently settle Bear Valley. They arrived in the fall of 1866, only one year after Americans first claimed land in the area under the recent Homesteading Act of 1862. Ben Bacon, the seventh and last child which Bacon family matriarch, Elizabeth Quigley Shell Bacon, would bear, was the first American child to be born here.

His birth occurred during the midst of a violent winter storm which sent water flowing through the Bacon's small claim-cabin and even underneath Elizabeth's bed.

Ben's birth was celebrated as the beginning of a new era for Bear Valley—and there is no disputing the truth of this—but he was not the first child to be born in this land. Bear Valley had once been populated by another people, the Chalon and Mutsun bands of the Ohlone Indians, who had lived here for at least four thousand years before the arrival of the Americans. At the time the Bacons arrived, however, the Ohlone had been absent for nearly half a century, their ancient culture and social institutions broken by the Spanish colonization of California, which predated American settlement. By about 1810, all of the Chalon and Mutsun people had either fled inland or been taken by the Spanish to live and work as baptized Christians at Mission Soledad or Mission San Juan Bautista, which had been established by Franciscan missionaries in 1791 and 1797, respectively. These missions were later dissolved after Mexico—and Mexican California—won its independence from Spain in 1821. All of the missions' properties were dispersed or lost in the mid-1830s with the Mexican Secularization Acts, and the baptized Indians who had survived the mission period gradually drifted away. Many found jobs as domestic laborers and as *vaqueros* (cowboys) in the new *ranchero* economy which now dominated California life. No Mexican ranchos were ever established in Bear Valley or the immediate vicinity of the Pinnacles, but at last two were not very far away: to the north was the Rancho Cienega de los Paicines (where the present town of Paicines is located), and to the south was the Rancho San Lorenzo, later known as the Topo Ranch. Historical accounts from the 1850s describe Indians—probably Mutsun or Chalon—working as *vaqueros* at the latter. They may have been working at the Paicines Rancho as well.

By 1848, this brief Mexican interlude was over, and California became part of the United States with the conclusion of the Mexican-American War. It was this event, and the nearly-simultaneous discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, which set the stage for the eventual settlement of Bear Valley by American homesteaders, though it would take nearly two decades more before these immigrants would overspill the crowded San Francisco Bay Area and wander this far south. When they did, the land they found seemed largely untouched and uninhabited—it was this apparent emptiness which attracted early settlers like the Bacons. The few Indians who remained in the area did not appear to have much connection to the land, since they mostly worked for nearby ranchers. By the 1850s, many local Indians had also become employed as laborers in the New Idria mercury mines east of Bear Valley. (These were discovered in 1854.) Eventually, some of the Indians would emulate their new American neighbors by attempting to establish small farms, though few ever formally homesteaded. Although the American settlers were only dimly aware of the Indians who still survived in their midst, homesteaders in Bear Valley would occasionally be reminded how populous its ancient inhabitants had once been from the numerous mortars, arrow points and other stone artifacts they frequently uncovered when plowing their fields.

Less observed was the legacy of the Ohlone Indians on their physical environment, especially its vegetative patterns, which may have been manipulated and conditioned over thousands of years by intentional human management strategies. The implications of this possibility are only now being considered by modern land managers. Ironically, when the Bacon family first arrived in 1866, they believed that the landscape they had discovered in Bear Valley was a pristine wilderness. In fact, it may actually have been a managed cultural landscape which appeared natural only because its human occupants were no longer present to attest to their activities. It is even possible that the once wetter environment described by the early settlers was a result of these native land management practices, but that is another story and will be told in full at a later date. Descendents of the Chalon and Mutsun are still around and have organized as the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band of Costanoan/Ohlone Indians. More information can be found at their website: <http://amahmutsun.org>.