



Pinnacles Partnership's day at the ranch



More than 100 friends of the Pinnacles gathered at the RS-Bar Guest Ranch on June 20 for the annual Pinnacles Partnership Picnic Day.

The picnic is the Partnership's annual thank-you to its members. This year's edition was the third, and the first to be held outside Pinnacles National Monument. The reason for the change of venue is a new partnership with the owners and operators of the guest ranch – one brought about as the result of a historic event.

Earlier this year, a pair of California Condors were found to be nesting in a small cavity high on a remote cliff at RS-Bar. The pair hatched a chick in April; the first wild-hatched condor chick in San Benito County in what may be more than a century. The young bird continues to grow under the watchful eyes of the ranch staff and the Pinnacles Condor Crew.

More than 60 picnic day participants were shuttled to a ridge some 12 miles east of Pinnacles National Monument, where they could peer across a steep ravine into the nest site.

In addition to a barbecue spread, visitors participated in botany or birding walks,

learned about the California Condor recovery effort, discovered a ledge packed with marine fossils, led by a geologist, enjoyed a watercolor demonstration, a crafts table and listened to music.

Many in the group remained overnight in the guest facilities at RS-Bar. After another round of feasting, local astronomers opened their telescopes to reveal new corners of the night sky.

Native American perspectives were presented in a video and through discussions, and after breakfast the next morning, the overnight guests began making their way home.

The RS-Bar Ranch, in collaboration with the Pinnacles Partnership, continues to make visits to the nest site available, and the Pinnacles Partnership will be offering a variety of workshops and activities based at the ranch. The facility is an ideal partner, combining its own spectacular landscape with comfortable accommodations and proximity to Pinnacles.

Further information about visiting the condor nest site is available by calling the Pinnacles Partnership at 831-389-4486, ext. 239, or 634-1012, ext. 12, or direct your browsers to www.pinnaclespartnership.org.

The latest from the Condor Crew

By Alacia Welch, National Park Service

Greetings from the Pinnacles Condor Crew!

The summer months are as busy as usual for us and the birds we track. We have experienced the joy of watching a young condor mature in its nest, while also seeing one of our recently released condors perish. We frequently travel all over San Benito, Monterey and Fresno counties looking for all of the free-flying central California condors while also monitoring the new cohort of four juveniles in the flight pen. We have had chance encounters with interesting people and are planning the next public release event. All in all, time carries on and we adapt to the changing circumstances.

The nestling being reared by Condors 303 and 313 now has a number! Researchers at San Diego Zoo overseeing the "condor studbook" recently dubbed our nestling No. 514. His black feathers are starting to replace his gray down and the last time we measured, he weighed over 16 pounds! Pretty soon we intend to outfit him with his first transmitter, so that when he finally fledges (takes a first flight from the nest) we will be able to track him wherever he goes.

In the end of June, we had one of the most recently released Pinnacles condors, No. 422, go missing. Unfortunately, after two weeks of trying to locate her, we found her dead. At this time we do not know the cause of death, but she has been sent to the San Diego Zoo pathology laboratory for analysis.

The 2009 cohort arrived from Boise and Oregon to Pinnacles in early July. They will spend the next couple of months acclimating to this area before being released in September. So far, all seem to be adjusting to their new home quite well. They are a very curious group, checking out every aspect of the flight pen. Recently, we opened one of the traps to the interior of the pen and by the next morning, they were poking their heads into the new space and by the afternoon had fully explored it all.

We will be hosting the next public condor release on Saturday, Sept. 26. Similarly to last year, we recommend arrival by 8:30 a.m. to hike to the site in time for a ceremony starting at 10 a.m. Other details will be forthcoming, but save the date! As before, we can never guarantee that a condor will be released that day, but it is a great time to learn more about the birds and to celebrate condors in California. We hope to see all of you there!

Events Calendar

Sunday, Aug. 16

Pinnacles Partnership Board of Directors Retreat

A review of the past year's progress, along with goal-setting and an organizational development workshop

Saturday, Aug. 22

Weed Pull

Volunteers should meet at the east side Visitor Center at 9 a.m. wearing long pants, closed-toe boots and sun protection to help rid the area around the campground of invasive, non-native weeds.

Water and refreshments will be provided.

For further information, contact Tessa Christensen at 831-389-4486, ext. 272
For more information, see the article on page 6 in this edition of The Voice.

Saturday, Sept. 26

Condor Release Event

Visitors should register at the east entrance Visitor Center by 8:30 to be guided to the release area. Visitors should be prepared for changing weather conditions, pack water and wear sturdy shoes. Following the release, visitors are invited to help in a monument cleanup activity.

For more information, see the article on this page of The Voice.

Saturday, Oct. 10

Condor Classic

Cyclists of all abilities are invited to ramble over some of San Benito County's most scenic byways. Rides range from a family-friendly ramble through San Juan Valley to a 100-mile ride to Pinnacles and back. Further information can be found at

www.condorclassic.com

Pan-American partnership in condor recovery

A logo has been designed for a reusable bag and possibly other products for distribution in Argentina and California. Check it out! The bags will be a fundraiser for both programs as we strive for the common goal of healthy condor populations across the Americas.

A Memorandum of Understanding to establish a Sister Park relationship between our local Pinnacles National Monument and Parque Nacional Quebrada del Condorito is now ready for official signing by the National Park Service Director and the Argentine Administration of National Park's Director (date to be announced).

In another exciting new development, we are able to bring doctoral candidate Carolina Gargiulo from the National University of Cordoba, Argentina to work with us for a three-month period beginning Nov. 10. Carolina is currently researching Andean condors in three Argentine national parks, including our new sister park, Parque Nacional Quebrada del Condorito. Staff from Pinnacles National Monument will take care of work-related hosting, showing her all the intricacies of managing a condor flock and introducing her to the other condor recovery partners in



California. Carolina will become part of the team, being immersed in many of the daily tasks.

We are seeking a few “host weekends” from Partnership members to show Carolina the beauty and wonder of the central coast of California. This could involve an invitation to a local ranch and vineyard to experience the agricultural and rural qualities of our region or a trip to Monterey Bay, San Francisco or the high Sierras. We ask that the outing be fully hosted (transportation, meals, lodging), since Carolina will be here on a very modest stipend.

Please contact Jan Shriner or Rob Galindo at info@pinnaclespartnership.org if you are interested in welcoming Carolina here in this way.

We will plan a welcoming reception and let you know the details as November approaches.

For a thorough and fascinating update on our Pinnacles Condor flock (including the latest antics of the seven juveniles released this winter), read Alacia Welch's report at:

www.nps.gov/pinn/naturescience/condors.htm.

Portraits of Pinnacles at 100: Part II



All images by Gavin Emmons ©2008-2009.

Editor's Note: Excerpted from an article published in the Summer 2008 edition of Nature Photographer magazine.

By Gavin Emmons, National Park Service

The diversity of raptors and the scenic grandeur of the rock outcrops and cliff walls at Pinnacles National Monument are major attractions for visitors to the park. Despite the long dry days, bright light, and extreme heat of summer, this is an ideal season to see raptors, as nestlings near fledging and take their first flights from cliff-cavity nests.

It is worth noting the important role that raptors – birds of prey – have played historically and today in the resource protection and management of the Pinnacles National Monument. Despite the relatively small size of the park, 15 species of raptors nest at Pinnacles including six California species of concern. Cliff-nesting by raptors – particularly prairie and peregrine falcons – was documented by park biologists as early

as the 1920s. In the 1930s park managers recognized the importance of protecting nesting falcons from disturbance by creating a “Falcon Sanctuary” covering the cliffs at Balconies and Machete Ridge on the west side of the park. Through the 1950s, this area was designated on park maps and hiking and climbing were limited and occasionally banned within the “sanctuary.” Falcon nesting was used as a justification to prevent the development of a through-road connecting the east and west sides of the park, and provided a major impetus for extending the executive park boundaries north from the Balconies area.

In the 1980s interactions between rock climbers and nesting raptors were studied, and voluntary closures were developed for use throughout Pinnacles to protect sensitive species, particularly prairie falcons, peregrine falcons, and golden eagles, from disturbance during the breeding season, balanced against...

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recreational use of cliffs by rock climbers. Prairie falcon populations at Pinnacles are especially significant and represent one of the highest nesting concentrations of the species in a National Park unit. Prairie falcons are very similar to



peregrine falcons in size and shape, but have different facial markings, more brown backs and crowns, and dark feathered “armpits” distinctive in flight. The multi-colored cliffs and rock outcrops at Pinnacles also provide important cliff-nesting habitat for red-tailed hawks, American kestrels, and owl species including barn owls and great-horned owls. There is nothing quite like returning from a hike through Pinnacles past twilight, the stars ablaze overhead as barn owls screech and great-horned owls hoot, their calls reverberating from the cliff walls overhead.

Photographic opportunities

Photographing the natural beauty and diversity at Pinnacles National Monument can be challenging during the summer. The Mediterranean climate at the park makes for intense dry seasons: the light is often bright and daily temperatures can climb beyond 100 degrees. Nevertheless, wonderful photographic opportunities can be pursued during the Pinnacles summer at all times of day. Because of the park’s close proximity to the California coast, mornings of fog can lead to high clouds, balanced shade, and excellent possibilities for photographing rock details and macro shots of canyon cliffs. Even during midday, images of rock formations with light clouds framing the pinnacles and outcrops can be spectacular. Dawn and dusk



at Pinnacles are ideal for capturing images of peaks and cliff walls with orange to reddish light playing across them, enhancing the subtle colors already present in the rock faces. Consider photographing the Balconies on the west

side and the High Peaks from Condor Gulch Overlook or the High Peaks Trail for dawn photos. Machete Ridge and the west side of the High Peaks are beautiful for photographs at sunset.

Photographing raptors in the park can also be highly rewarding. Cliff-nesting raptors are active through the breeding season, with peak activity during fledging in June and July when young are first taking flight. Prairie and peregrine falcons are quite vocal, and can be visible from nest sites, particularly along the High Peaks Trail and the Balconies Cliff Trail. Long telephoto lenses are usually essential. It is always worth inquiring with rangers at the visitor centers and with

biologists in the park to determine where photographic possibilities are most likely.

While photographing raptors please remember that we are visitors to their home, Pinnacles is a National Park unit, and these are sensitive species threatened by disturbance. Keep your distance and do not attempt to feed any birds or other wildlife. For further information on raptors and condors at Pinnacles, call 831-389-4486 or check online at nps.gov/pinn.

At the edges of the day, as the raptors circle over the peaks and call from nest cavities in cliff walls, I hope to see you out in the park!

Habitat restoration volunteers pull together

By Tessa Christensen, Pinnacles Habitat Restoration Volunteer Coordinator

Pinnacles National Monument contains a variety of habitat types that host biologically rich plant communities across the park, such as chaparral, riparian corridors, oak woodlands, and grasslands. Within these native plant communities, exotic-nonnative species can cause serious ecological damage. A vital staging ground for managing these invasive plant species is the campground, located near the park entrance. From here, many weed seeds are inadvertently transported to other areas of the park on shoes and gear, hindering progress towards park wide invasive species control.

The campground also hosts the park's most extensive riparian habitat, a plant community rare and sensitive in our arid environment, yet threatened by its susceptibility to invasive plant species. This area is a prime location to educate visitors on

the degradation caused by invasive plant species and to launch volunteer efforts in restoring the surrounding native habitat.

Pinnacles National Monument Habitat Restoration Volunteer program focuses on these objectives and aims to restore the native habitat and biological diversity in the campground. The 2009 spring volunteer season experienced a record number of volunteers with an astounding 259 people giving their time and energy to the removal of invasive species within the campground. Horehound

(*Marrubium vulgare*), summer mustard (*Hirshfeldia incana*), and yellow star thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*) were among the many species managed by volunteers.

In a 12-week period, 18 events were held. Three of those events were co-hosted with Pinnacles Partnership. The events were held on Feb. 28, April 18, and June 13 with members successfully pulling approximately 18,800 high priority non-native plants. Numerous Boy Scout troops, the Sierra Club, Point Reyes Habitat Restoration team, and local corporations also tenaciously removed invasive species throughout the spring months. AUGUST 22, 2009 is the next scheduled habitat restoration event.

The California Alpine Club Foundation

recently gave Pinnacles Partnership \$1,000 for the Habitat Restoration Volunteer program. This funding will be used to acquire materials and supplies for volunteer outreach and appreciation.



The next steps for the Pinnacles Habitat Restoration Volunteer program are implementing the Adopt-a-Site program in the campground and recruiting for restoration efforts on the bottomlands.

The long term goal of the Habitat Restoration Volunteer program is to protect the thousands of acres within the monument that are relatively pristine. A special thanks to all of the individuals whose continuing support helps to keep Pinnacles National Monument a beautiful natural resource!

Bottomlands burn a success

By Erica Uhor, Pinnacles Habitat Restoration Intern

On June 9, Pinnacles National Monument staff completed a 130-acre prescribed burn in the Bottomlands at the east side park entrance. The burn was scheduled to occur over two days, but with next-to-perfect wind, temperature, humidity and wildland firefighting resources it was completed in one. This prescribed fire is already revealing a positive affect on the landscape.

The burn also successfully provided training opportunities for various wildland firefighting tasks. Many partners helped with the effort, including the Bureau of Land Management, Point Reyes National Seashore, Golden Gate National Recreational Area, CalFire, and Gabilan Conservation Camp. The day provided a great example of cooperation and support across agencies.

The Bottomlands prescribed burn was conducted as part of a larger grassland restoration project. In 2006, the park acquired over 2,000 acres, much of which is highly infested with non-native invasive plant species. Prescribed fire is one tool we are using to control a large infestation of yellow star-thistle, an invasive plant that threatens the Monument and surrounding areas by displacing native species. The burn was successful in killing the majority of yellow star-thistle

plants before they were able to produce seed.

Prior to the burn, an extensive amount of vegetation data was collected in monitoring plots installed throughout the area to be restored. This data will be useful to evaluate the long term treatment effects and native plant re-establishment success. Native grass seed was collected for propagation and will then be planted within the monitoring plots this winter to determine successful methods for native plant re-establishment on a larger scale.

Another interesting note: immediately after the burn, wildlife biologists explored the blackened landscape looking for fauna that may have perished in the fire. A Western yellow-bellied racer (a native, non-venomous snake) was found, a first for the Monument!

Pinnacles employees are thrilled by the success of the burn and are evaluating methods for treating yellow star-thistle in the following years. Consecutive follow-up treatment is critical to fully deplete the seed bank and bring the yellow star-thistle infestation to manageable levels. Efforts to meet this goal may include integrated pest management techniques such as repeated prescribed burning, prescribed goat grazing, herbicide use and mowing.

Ben Bacon Ranch Historic District

Part I: The National Historic Preservation Act and the documentation of cultural resources

By Timothy Babalis, Landscape Historian, National Park Service

On July 13, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in Sacramento reviewed and concurred with a National Park Service determination that the Ben Bacon Ranch at Pinnacles National Monument is a historic district. This represents an important landmark for the management of cultural resources at Pinnacles, but what exactly does it mean? I'd like to answer that question in two parts. To begin, let me explain what a historic district is and how we go about establishing one (and why we bother). After that, I'll explain the significance of this particular historic district with a brief history of the Ben Bacon Ranch.

A historic district is a property type established by the National Register of Historic Places (usually referred to simply as the National Register) Districts are defined by the Register as properties which possess "a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical

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development.” Consistent with this definition, the Ben Bacon Historic District represents a significant concentration of features related to the history of homesteading and early ranching within the area now protected by Pinnacles National Monument. Comprising approximately 331 acres, the district is located in the open bottomlands between the park boundary at Highway 25 and the campground. This area was once the core of the large Ben Bacon Ranch and includes the sites (and occasionally ruins) of several earlier homesteads as well. Although many of the historic structures associated with these homesteads no longer exist, the landscape as a whole still retains much of its historic character. For example, the open fields which constitute the majority of the district still look much as they did in the late 19th Century when they were used to cultivate wheat and barley or to graze livestock. Clusters of trees still mark the location of ranch core areas, even though the buildings are gone. Dirt roads and fencelines show the relationship between historic properties and how people once circulated through them. And in a few cases—like the Ben Bacon house itself—the original buildings are still standing. Although few if any of these features *by themselves* possess National Register significance, *taken together* they are able to convey a sense for what the historic landscape may have been like when Ben Bacon and other early homesteaders were still alive. Because it is necessary to maintain this sense of the whole in order to appreciate the significance of this historic landscape, the Park Service has chosen to document and manage the cultural resources here as a district rather than as discrete objects and structures in isolation.

But what does it mean to establish a historic district, and why bother? In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). It was the culmination of many years of effort by citizens and private philanthropies concerned with preserving America’s cultural heritage, which was threatened by development in the decades immediately following World War II. In the interest of progress, the nation’s historical fabric was being torn down or paved over at a rapid pace. Much of this was being carried out by the federal government – or with the assistance and encouragement of the government. Prominent examples include President Eisenhower’s Interstate Highways Act, or President Kennedy’s Urban Renewal Program. Within the Park Service, there was Director Conrad Wirth’s Mission 66, a 10-year funding initiative to improve and expand the physical infrastructure of the national parks. (Pinnacles received new water supply and sewer systems). Preservationists responded with the National Historic Preservation Act, which was designed to draw attention to America’s threatened cultural heritage, while at the same time introducing a process for evaluating potentially significant properties before they were inadvertently destroyed. The most visible result of the NHPA was the National Register, a list or index of historically significant properties as determined by cultural resource specialists and the public. The person principally responsible for reviewing and accepting this determination is each state’s Historic Preservation Officer, although the final arbiter is the Keeper of the National Register in Washington, DC. Although listing on the register has no legal authority and cannot prevent the destruction of historic properties, it does raise awareness of the consequences of such actions. In the case of a federal undertaking – that is, any project funded or permitted by the federal government – a lengthy review of the impact of the undertaking on historically significant or potentially-significant properties must occur. This review involves all interested parties, including members of the public, making it difficult for the undertaking to proceed before dissenting views have been heard. The greater transparency introduced by this process has resulted in the preservation of many historic properties which might otherwise have been lost before anyone knew what had happened.

Later amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act required federal agencies

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like the National Park Service to document all properties owned by the agency which might be eligible for listing on the National Register. This brings me back to the Ben Bacon Historic District, because these amendments (codified in Section 110) are the direct cause for the recent establishment of this district. The intended purpose of Section 110 is to evaluate the significance of all federally-owned properties before any potentially-destructive undertakings are even proposed. Significant properties and concentrations of properties (districts) could be identified ahead of time and undertakings planned around them, thereby protecting the cultural resources and increasing operational efficiencies at the same time. But just as important as these practical considerations, Section 110 has allowed the National Park Service to fund research on properties like the Ben Bacon Ranch and to produce documented histories of them. While the immediate purpose of this research is to fulfill policy requirements, the knowledge gained in the process can help us all to understand and appreciate better the cultural resources protected by the park. This is probably the most important implication of the National Register and its associated processes – by requiring us to study and understand the resources in our care, we learn to value them, and in valuing them, we protect them for future generations.

In Part II, I'll discuss the history of the Ben Bacon Ranch and why it was determined to be significant.