



# Regional Parks Association

## NEWSLETTER

May 2005

### RPA Board Members

**President:** Amelia Wilson, **Vice-president:** Joe Engbeck, **Treasurer:** Pete Wilson, **Secretary:** Judi Bank  
Tim Gordon, Hulet Hornbeck, Kathleen Nimr

## PARKS AREN'T JUST PRETTY PLACES TO GO

### *Prairie Falcon study reveals bigger picture*

As the featured speaker at RPA's annual membership meeting, Douglas Bell, East Bay Regional Park District's new Wildlife Program Manager, described a study that was done under his direction in Pinnacles National Monument, where a number of steep rocky cliffs provide ideal nesting sites for prairie falcons. The study determined that 7 to 11 pairs of prairie falcons nest on the cliffs and then spread out to hunt over a broad area mainly to the east and west in the Gabilan Mountains and the adjacent Salinas Valley.

Perhaps the major finding of the carefully

The procedure used in the study—informally referred to as "trap, tag, and trail"—involved capturing the birds, tagging them for identification, placing small radio transmitters on them, and then tracking them to see where they went and what they did. The researchers used mist nets to capture the falcons, and then took careful measurements before fitting each bird with a special harness pack complete with a radio transmitter. The harness was designed to degrade and fall off after a period of time. When it proved impracticable to follow the falcons from the ground, small airplanes were used two to three times a week.

The study showed that the falcons did almost all of their hunting in areas where development had not disturbed the natural landscape; a little hunting occurred in vineyards, orchards, or other agricultural crop land, and almost no hunting occurred in urban or suburban areas. Most of the falcon's prey consisted of small mammals such as ground squirrels.

conducted study was that falcons were dependent on an area far larger than the national monument itself. The monument was simply a place of refuge for the birds—a place with suitable nest sites on cliffs that were so remote and so little visited by people that falcons could successfully nest there. Bell's study makes it clear that the national monument is not self-sufficient and entirely independent from its surrounding terrain. In fact, the falcons live in and are dependent on the same environment that people live in and depend upon.

The study is an example of the idea that William E. Brown develops in his charming little book, *Islands of Hope*, in which Brown asks us to remember that parks are more than just pretty places in which to hike, picnic, and perhaps do a little bird watching: "Parks are more, much more, than places to have a little fun or learn the names of butterflies and dead generals." They are places where people can learn essential lessons about the world in which we live—a natural world we are apt to take for granted as we go about our busy lives, insulated from natural realities by the

comforts and conveniences of our modern urban environments.

## **RPA BYLAWS AMENDED**

At RPA's Annual Meeting April 17, those present approved amendments to the bylaws in the form sent to the entire membership with the March newsletter. The following letter from

Life Member Paul Marhenke III, now living in Prince Rupert, Canada, was read:

" ... I received the March 2005 Regional Parks Association Newsletter with an enclosed copy of the proposed amendments to the 1949 bylaws signed by my mother, Esther R. Marhenke as Secretary to the newly formed organization. It was interesting to review the bylaws with the proposed amendments and note that they were originally signed on 12 September 1949 ...At that time I had just barely turned nine years old...

I do remember the incessant telephone calls and the many meetings in our living room in the Berkeley hills during the conceptualizing and organizing process. I remember that Herbert Mason, Professor of Botany at the University of California and a neighbor of ours, agreed to be the first President. I remember that Dick Leonard, who, at that time I think was Secretary of the Sierra Club, provided much assistance and advice.

I think the original motivation for the formation of the RPA related to the Nature Area in Tilden Park. Around 1947 or 1948 my mother had something to do with the establishment of a children's nature program there at least in part for my own benefit. But my mother's interest in that program quickly enlarged into a concern for the Regional Parks in totality, recognizing how unique the concept of the Regional Parks was and how necessary it was to have an organization of citizens concerned with their administration, preservation and expansion.

My mother considered herself to be shy and introverted, but was actually very effective when she would decide to organize and motivate other people. The cause of protecting the Regional Parks was of primary

importance, so her own discomfort was ignored.

Esther R. Marhenke died in Berkeley in September 1966 just a little short of her 63<sup>rd</sup> birthday. The Regional Parks Association is now nearly as old as she was. I think in 1949 my mother would never have predicted that the RPA would still be in existence this many years later. I think also that she would have been very pleased that it has survived this long and is still providing an important and useful function. The most important point, though, is that RPA has survived and is still effective. I commend the members of RPA and greatly appreciate your efforts. May the RPA survive for a great many more years!"

## **VALUE OF RPA MEMBERSHIP**

**by Hulet Hornbeck**

Your continued and renewed membership in RPA is an important contribution to the support of our region's open space and park programs. At a time when events seem negative and dreary, and it is easy to relax into cynicism or complacency, RPA's role is more important than ever. The momentum of the past forty years in the preservation of regional parks and open space is clearly at risk. We could lose the present hard-won balance between population growth and commercial development on the one hand and assured park and outdoor recreation opportunities on the other. We could also lose irreplaceable elements of our region's native wildlife as well as our present standards of air and water quality.

The Regional Parks Association has tried hard to be responsible and to maintain its advocacy credibility. Board members devote days in researching proposed park district land use plans. The experience and talent they bring to their analysis results in vastly superior plans, as finally adopted. Our Bay Area urban environment and the culture it supports are unequalled in the nation and beyond. But the future of our region can only be assured by an always-present effort—by eternal vigilance—by well informed and concerned citizens.

Please help insure that RPA survives and keeps working. Keep your membership; encourage others to join.

### DO YOU HIKE THESE TRAILS?

The East Bay Area Trails Council has forwarded to EBRPD the following list of trails on which bicycle use may soon be permitted.

If you are a hiker and know these trails in the way that only a hiker can, RPA wants to encourage you to weigh in. Let the District know how you feel about sharing these single track trails with bicycles.

*Mollok Trail and Coyote Trail – Morgan Territory Regional Preserve*

*Rocky Ridge Road and Upper Trail – Las Trampas Regional Wilderness*

*Pioneer Trail – Dry Creek Regional Park*

*Zeile Creek Trail – Garin*

And after you've checked out these trails, how about a **day hike with llamas** in Redwood May 21 or May 22, or June 4? Learn **flyfishing** at Lake Anza June 12? A beginner's **kayak trip to Brooks Island** June 18? These great EBRPD excursions require a fee. Want something free? Help with the **hay harvest** at Ardenwood from 1-2 p.m. every Sunday in June. Stroll **Low tide at Crab Cove** 10:30 to noon June 26. Enjoy "**Tuesday Twilights**" – a 7-9 p.m. 3 miler in Sibley June 14 or **Sunset-Full Moonrise Solstice** 3.5 miler June 21 to ridgeline vista point (Macdonald staging area off Redwood Road. Call EBRPD at 510-635-0135 for details.

Preserve. Watch the EBparks website or call EBRPD and ask to be put on a notification list.

### TREASURE TROVE OF MEMORIES RECORDED FOR POSTERITY

EBRPD has been interviewing Board members and others who worked for the District in the past, plus those many people – ranchers, miners, dynamite production workers, etc. – who have worked or lived on properties that were later acquired by the District. So far, more than 300 interviews have been done.

Some are taped and transcribed and some are videoed. Participants often contribute pictures and artifacts to go with their stories. To quote from the EBRPD website: "From the period of early dynamite production at Point Pinole to mining sand and coal in the Antioch hills, to raising cattle in the Ohlone Wilderness, the stories of the 'early days' reflect the strength of character and inventiveness of the individuals who pioneered county lands and contributed to the development of East Bay communities."

Eleven oral histories were conducted and/or completed in 2004 and early 2005. The plan for 2005 is to record oral histories through the efforts of Traci Parent (who has been the lead in this project), Ned MacKay and Jocelyn Real (video histories) with support from two interns and a part time clerical aide. They are looking forward to getting histories in the next few years from people involved with Bond Measure AA. Interviews will also be focused on individuals from new LUP areas.

Know someone who should be included? Call the Park District and let them know.

No date has yet been set for a public hearing on the Land Use Plan for Sibley Volcanic

Yes, I'd like to become an RPA member  
 Please renew my membership for 2005

Email \_\_\_\_\_ (print please)

Mail to: Pete Wilson, Treasurer  
\$10 dues enclosed  
35 Lost Valley Drive  
Orinda CA 945  
\$250 life membership  
**\*Star by your name on address label?  
You've paid 2005 dues! No star? Send  
check today!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_