SSA General Meeting

The Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group

Speaker – Glenn R. Stewart

January 31, 2003

Refreshments 7:00 pm - Program 7:30 pm
CDF Saratoga Summit Fire Station
(Located on Skyline Blvd., about 1 mile north of Highway 9)

Bring a potluck dessert.
SSA will provide hot beverages and soft drinks.

Glenn Stewart, a founding member of the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group (SCPBRG), will be our guest speaker at this SSA General Meeting. He will talk about the peregrine falcon recovery program and bring a tame peregrine falcon to share with us. Work was initiated in 1975 to lead peregrine falcon population recovery activities in California when just a handful of nesting peregrines remained in the state, and none were found east of the Mississippi River. Today, there are more than 250 pairs in California and the peregrine falcon has been removed from the federal endangered species list. SCPBRG continues its work as a leader in raptor research and management. Current projects focus on Channel Island restoration, bald eagle migration aided by satellite transmitters, a statewide survey of peregrine falcons, and mitigation of raptor electrocutions on the state’s power transmission grid. Glenn Stewart has participated in studies of bald eagles, golden eagles, goshawks, peregrine falcons, prairie falcons, and Harris’ hawks in Alaska, Idaho, California, and Arizona. We are very pleased to have him share his expertise with the South Skyline Association.
MROSD Extension Plan Elicits Differing Points of View

In February 1971 the South Skyline Association endorsed the proposal for the original formation of Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District. The SSA was instrumental in developing the MROSD policy that limits use of eminent domain to unoccupied land. Thus, at a special board meeting on November 14, the SSA board examined the current plan for MROSD to expand the district boundaries to the coast, and voted to send a letter of support to MROSD for the expansion that is within the SSA area. The fact that eminent domain cannot be used in the area of expansion was a strong factor in the board’s decision. Below are two letters received by the SSA Board from Skyline residents regarding MROSD and the planned expansion.

SSA Board Member in favor of expansion…

As a member of the South Skyline Association Board, I attended the recent meeting concerning the extension of the boundary to the San Mateo Coast. However, the Skyline Board felt that any statement made by the Board either in favor or in opposition to the MROSD plan would relate only to that sphere of influence of the South Skyline Association and not to the coast side region. The plan to extend the MROSD boundaries is the result of several years of planning. Initially, MROSD was approached by three coast Side communities asking for inclusion in the district to help in preservation of open space. One of those communities, Pescadero, has subsequently withdrawn support for the plan.

The meeting was attended by a large number of people from within and outside of the South Skyline area. I was surprised at the amount of antipathy both toward MROSD and the plan. Those attending raised many issues. There was concern about the County’s plan to survey wells and septic tanks (I also have those concerns). There was question raised about school tax support being lost because of District acquisitions removing private property from the tax roles. There were questions raised about the Districts expertise in the potential management of farmlands. It was even suggested that the District might bear some responsibility for the influx of feral pigs into the region. Unfortunately, the issues raised had little or nothing to do with the extension of the MROSD boundaries. MROSD has no responsibility for wells or septic tanks. The amount of tax dollars available to the coast Side schools is determined by the State and has no relationship to locally collected property taxes from coast Side residents. The staff readily admitted that there was much to learn about management of farmlands. However, MROSD will not be managing farmlands unless asked to do so. As part of the plan, the District has given up the right of eminent domain, therefore cannot force sale from anyone. Furthermore, they have no enforcement authority. Thus, no one needs to have anything to do with MROSD even if they are inside the District boundaries. There was a lot of other discussion which I will not take time to detail.

I have had my difficulties with MROSD around their acquisition of the front of our property for their trail. I would have to say that I have rarely encountered more arrogant individuals. However, a fair agreement was eventually reached. Since then, procedures and policies have thankfully evolved. An example is the recent purchase by MROSD of the Big Dipper ranch on Alpine Road from willing sellers. The owners will continue to have the right to graze cattle and will keep a several acre in holding. The old Page Mill Road will become a MROSD multiuse trail all the way to Portola Park. In spite of the past, the fact that development had been controlled in our beautiful area, that there are wonderful, well maintained, trails all around my home, that there are ranger-peace officers patrolling the District, and yes, that the feral pigs in my area have been well controlled by the abatement program, are on face of it very valuable to me. These things make me conclude that MROSD is acting in my best interest, and I believe in the best interest of my neighbors.

I encountered my old friends Pat and Shella Bordi at the meeting. Pat asked, "Are you one of them?" I answered affirmatively that I was one of the conspirators. Yes, Pat, I voted in favor of a Board statement of support of the MROSD plan. I think that the idea of voluntary Conservation Easements could be a real boon to property owners within the district. Just think about it. One could be paid to forego real estate development of open lands, yet continue to own and live on the land and pass it on to one's heirs. That sounds like an interesting potential option. However, remember, no one has to have anything to do with MROSD unless it is in their best interest.

Bill Fowkes

Skyline Ranchers have had negative experiences…

As a fourth generation rancher in the Skyline area, we have had many neighbors over the years. The most difficult, uncooperative and unsupportive of them has by far been the MROS District. Some of the problems we have had are:

1. Trespassers, bicyclists, hikers, riders. MROSD has been unable to assist us with controlling trespassers. Their advice to us is to place the persons under citizen’s arrest and call the Sheriff’s department. The only access these trespassers have to our property is through the MROSD trails. When our cattle have gotten out onto MROSD land, we have been fined. On one occasion we had to hire a lawyer and go to court at an expense of thousands of dollars because we were fined for cattle trespassing when the cattle were not even ours. Good neighbors would have notified each other of trespassers or of loose cows and then helped each other to control them.

(Cont. page 3)
2. Control of hikers and vehicles. Because of MROSD's lack of personnel, we are forced to deal with hikers and vehicles off of trails and roads. By the time a ranger responds to the problem, normally several days have passed. Also, generally no rangers are available on Sundays when most of the problems occur. We have also been accused of being the people off the trails when we were the ones that dealt with the actual guilty parties.

3. Fire Control. MROSD has numerous miles of firebreaks along Skyline and protecting more inhabited areas. We share a long property line with MROSD and they have refused to create a fire break protecting our property even though there have been two fires in the past two years in the areas bordering our property.

4. Pest Control. Because of the large amount of unmanaged space held by MROSD, coyotes and wild pigs have become a large problem. The populations of these animals have increased drastically forcing large numbers to look to our property for food. In the last year we have lost many calves, several cats, and had a dog attacked by coyotes. Wild Pigs have caused damage to pastures, ponds, springs and creek banks. When we attempt to control these animals they simply retreat into MROSD land.

5. Invasive Plants. MROSD has done a good job at controlling invasive non-native plants, but have only done this in high public visibility areas. As a neighbor we have ended up with a large problem with these plants, but despite our attempts to control them, we are unsuccessful because of the MROSD land around us where there is no attempt made to control these plants. Because of the high density of these non-native plants such as the thistle plants, coyotes are unable to hunt in their natural habitat and therefore are forced onto our property causing a greater loss of calves. Good neighbors would have joined together to try and come up with a solution to each of theses problems. MROSD has not only not tried to work with us but often refuses to even address the problems at hand.

We are obviously supporters of open space because we have kept our land intact for generations. However we are against the annexation of coast side properties because we feel MROSD is unable to adequately manage their existing lands. Sincerely,

Chris & Veronica True
Mindego Ranch – Alpine Road
La Honda, CA

The largest concentrations of respondents were from the Las Cumbres, Oak Ridge Road, and Indian Rock Ranch areas, with others scattered around the SSA area.

It appears that there may be a possibility to get wired (xDSL) for people in the highly concentrated areas, but the remainder may have to be some sort of wireless access. We have located 4 different vendors that might be able to provide wireless connectivity, but it's not clear that they will be able to provide the service at a desirable price point. Stay tuned, we will be providing more information via the SSA website at www.southskyline.org/broadbandstatus.html.

**SPUG Quarterly Report**

Amerigas was swamped with phone calls during the recent PG&E power outages because customers were running low on propane due to the increased consumption by emergency power units.

The Kings Mountain Association recently signed a new contract with Amerigas, which is the same as the SPUG contract.

Recent SPUG prices are:
- September: $1.099/gallon
- October: 1.219
- November: 1.179
- December: 1.179
- January: 1.269

The rise in price in October was due to a temporary shut-down of the Benicia refinery which required that propane be transported from a more distant refinery. In mid-December the SPUG price rose to $1.269 while the open market price was $1.95/gallon.

Prices are subject to changes each Friday. Reported here are prices for the first week of the month. See www.southskyline.org for recent updates. Members 55 years of age or older qualify for a 5 cent/gallon discount on the SPUG group price. Our SPUG rate is based on automatic regular route deliveries on a keep-full basis, not "will call" service. With the beginning of the rainy season be sure to alert Amerigas if your access roads are treacherous when wet. Amerigas will arrange for deliveries to insure you do not run out of propane. Phone Amerigas at 1-800-660-1252.

Skyline Propane Users Group (SPUG) was formed as a benefit for SSA members. For information about joining the Skyline Propane Users Group (SPUG), or for members wishing to have current information on the Amerigas contract with us, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope with your request to Ruth Waldhauer, SSA Membership Chairperson, 22400 Skyline Boulevard, Box 35, La Honda, CA 94020.

**High-Speed Internet Access Update**

The current status is that we've received over 120 responses to our survey. Approximately 50% of the respondents would be willing to pay between $40 and $60, 35% between $60 and $80, and 15% between $80 and $100.

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SSA Board Elections

The SSA board elections will take place at the next SSA General Meeting on January 31.

Board incumbents are Pat Congdon, Larry Myers, Kris Smith, and Patti Begley. We have two new candidates for the SSA Board, Bill Prince and Hans Johsens.

Bill Prince has lived in the South Skyline area (San Mateo County) since the spring of 1996. During that time, he has been an active “board watcher”, Skylines distributor, and all around SSA volunteer. He is currently the chair of the High-speed Internet Committee as well as the Webmaster for the SSA web site. His interests include hiking, biking, kayaking, and building things (almost anything). He has held various technical and technical-management positions in the computer industry for 3 decades.

I am Hans Johsens. I have lived in the Santa Cruz Mountains south of Highway 9 for nearly 30 years, with close ties here for the other 7 years of my life. My wife, Donna, is a born and raised mountain girl as is her father a born and raised mountain man. As you can surmise from this, we are dedicated to mountain life.

I am professionally an Automotive Repair Technician (I am more comfortable as a mechanic) and have also been involved in the choose-and-cut Christmas Tree business since I was 13 years old, where I met my wonderful wife. Some of you may recognize me from Skyline Ranch or Alpine tree farms.

I have no experience as a board member, but I am willing to learn if some are willing to teach. I was approached as a candidate because of my attendance at a couple of SSA open meetings (wild pigs and county monitoring of wells and septic systems), as well as my long history here.

I tend to be fairly outspoken, and will gladly help to support the SSA in any way I can. Thank you for your consideration.

The Board Thanks Outgoing Members

SSA sends their thanks and appreciation to outgoing board members Georgia Stigall and Eric Isacson for their commitment to the South Skylines community. Both Georgia and Eric have served on the SSA board for many years and they will be missed - but not forgotten. Georgia will continue to serve on the SSA Communications Committee and is the SSA representative to the San Mateo County Weed Management Area. Eric will continue to be a great resource to the board.

Bill Chainey Remembered

We were saddened to learn of the death of Board Member, Bill Chainey, who passed away on October 22, 2002 after a battle with cancer.

Bill loved the redwoods. He and his wife, Janice, both Bay Area natives, have lived in San Mateo County more than 40 years. They built their retirement home among the redwoods in Middleton Tract adjacent to Portola Park. Bill served as treasurer of the Middleton Tract Road Association, and was an active participant for several years in the South Skyline Historical Society making significant contributions to the local history project.

Janice intends to keep ties with SSA, a group she values very much. She will also continue to serve on the Middleton Tract Water Board. Elected to the SSA board in January 2002, Bill served on several committees where his tact, friendliness, and engineering skills were much appreciated. Bill is missed by all.

Public Meeting for Alma Helipad and Forest Fire Station Replacement

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection is holding a public meeting to discuss the proposed Alma Helitack Base (HB) and Forest Fire Station (FFS) Replacement Facility located between Highway 17 and Lexington Reservoir. It is critically located to respond to fire emergencies in a 20-minute flight time in all directions. Existing buildings are no longer able to meet the increasing emergency response demands. This project involves removal and reconstruction of all existing FFS buildings and relocation of the HB to approximately 250 feet west of the existing helipad.

The Public Meeting will be informal with a brief overview of the project and the Environmental Impact Report. Date and Time: January 15, 2003 - 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Place: Lexington Elementary School, Cafeteria 19700 Santa Cruz Highway, Los Gatos, CA

SSA 2002 Treasurer’s Report

Submitted by Sharon Peters, Treasurer

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<td>Bank Balance (checking &amp; savings)</td>
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SOUTH SKYLINE ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

SSA fosters a sense of community spirit, keeps residents and property owners informed of public agency actions and other issues of concern in the South Skyline sphere of influence, protects the rights and represents the interests of those in our area, and engages in various projects to enhance the unique South Skyline environment.

Regular membership is open to property owners and residents in the South Skyline area who are at least 18 years of age. The SSA area includes Skyline Boulevard and feeder roads between Route 84 and the southern terminus of Skyline Boulevard. Those outside the SSA area may apply for associate (non-voting) membership by paying regular dues. Membership includes delivery of the quarterly newsletter SKYLINES and participation in Skyline Propane Users Group (SPUG). Please provide the following necessary information:

Name(s): ___________________________________________________________

Mailing Address: ___________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

Property Location in the SSA area: ________________________________

Telephone: (____) ___________
E-mail (will be kept confidential): _________________________________

Check here if you do NOT want to be listed in the SSA roster: _________
(Distributed to members only)

Participant in Skyline Propane Users Group (SPUG)? _________
   Own Tank? _________ Rent Tank? _________

Return application and check for $15.00, payable to South Skyline Association, to Ruth Waldhauer, SSA Membership Chairperson, 22400 Skyline Boulevard, Box 35, La Honda, CA 94020.

Do you have comments about SSA general meetings? Which programs were most informative, or interesting, or pleasant social events? Are there other subjects or events you would like included in the General Meetings?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
This year, the South Skyline Fire and Rescue Volunteers need your donations to buy wildland fire protection equipment. **If you would like to donate, please write a separate check payable to South Skyline Fire and Rescue and mail it with your SSA membership.** Please include this portion of the application with your donation, which will be forwarded to the treasurer.

Name: __________________________________________________________________________
Amount enclosed: $_________

Address: __________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

**The South Skyline Fire and Rescue is also looking for volunteers.** If you are interested in volunteering, or would like more information about Fire and Rescue Volunteers please provide the following information.

Name: __________________________________________________________________________

Mailing Address: __________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

Phone: __________________________

  ____ I would like to be a volunteer
  ____ Please contact me for more information

The SSA is what we make it. Let us know if you have a talent or skill that would be useful. We are particularly looking for articles for SKYLINES, informal legal advice, printing access, people to join the History Project and people to monitor government agencies (Counties, parks, MROSD.) Any comments for the Board are also welcome.

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**SOUTH SKYLINE ASSOCIATION**

www.southskyline.org
Winter Resident   Ruby-Crowned Kinglet

The ruby-crowned kinglet is one of my favorite winter birds. The good news is they are just about everywhere we bird during the winter. And I mean everywhere; they flit here, there and everywhere, which makes them very hard to see for long periods of time (anything over two seconds). What makes them particularly fun to find and watch is seeing if they show their ruby crown. Another good thing about these tiny birds (only hummingbirds are smaller and it takes three to five birds to total an ounce – so says John Kricher in David Sibley’s great “Bird Life and Behavior” book) is that they are fairly vocal. I was once told their call sounded like a tape player on fast forward – jit jit jit jit. That certainly fits their personalities. Roger Tory Peterson called these little fellows “tiny birdlets” and wrote “kinglets nervously twitch their wings and therefore seem always in motion.”

Beyond the small size and the constant motion, kinglets have some very recognizable field marks. The first is their broken white or pale eye-ring, which makes them have that wide-eyed surprised look. Another is their pale wing bars that stand out against their buffy olive flanks. Their beak is very slender and acts like needle nose-pliers to glean insects off of branches and leaves. They even do a great imitation of a hummingbird by hovering over the branch to get all the insects they can from the hidden crevices.

Probably the best sighting of the fully exposed red headpiece was this November at McClellan Ranch in Cupertino. The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Chapter hosted David Sibley for a breakfast/book signing event. A few lucky diehards were invited to an early morning bird walk with the guest of honor. McClellan Ranch is a treat anytime, but this was amazing. As the group walked by one of the many oak trees that border the meadow, a ruby-crowned kinglet started his alarm call and chatter. We stopped and looked and there in the brilliant morning sun was this little bird with his ruby crest shining as if it were on fire. He was very upset with us and let us know in no uncertain terms that this was his tree and his bugs. We moved on quickly to reduce his stress.

~ Freddy Howell

Buckeyes Along the Boulevard

In places California buckeyes (Aesculus californica) border Skyline like, well, a boulevard. The plants grow as large shrubs or small trees 10-30 feet tall, and about as wide.

Beginning in February or March, green, opposite, palmate leaves appear on the light gray branches. The leaves are about 4-6 inches across, with 5-7 leaflets, and darker green on the top. New leaves continue to sprout through May while soil moisture is abundant. In mid to late summer, leaves dry up and turn brown. They may fall off shortly afterward, or in some years wait to be knocked off by the first good rain.

Flowers bloom in white candles, 4-8 inches tall, from May through June. Individual five-petal flowers have stamen longer than the petals. Flowers at the top of the candle are male, pollen bearing, while a few flowers at the base are bisexual, fruit producing.

Beige, pear-shaped fruit capsules ripen from September to October – typically 1, occasionally 2 from each candle. The limited number of bisexual flowers, and self-thinning properties keep too many heavy fruits from breaking the limbs. Inside each fruit is typically one dark brown seed, up to 2 inches across. As the beige capsule opens, revealing the brown seed, it resembles the eye of a buck. The round seeds then drop off the leafless trees from November to December, and are dispersed primarily by floodwaters and gravity.

California buckeyes are found only in California, in the coastal mountains, Central Valley, and Sierra Nevada foothills below 4,000 feet. They prefer creek sides, drainages, and moist canyons with well-drained soil. In some cases, road edges also provide a higher moisture environment, receiving both direct rainfall and runoff from the pavement.

Buckeyes are toxic to many animals, including humans. California natives used the mashed seeds to stupefy fish, making them easier to catch. In low acorn years, natives also leached the high carbohydrate seeds several times before cooking them for food. The fragrant flowers are toxic to European bees. Native bees and butterflies apparently are not affected.

~Sarah Schoen
Collective Wisdom from Skyliners On Power Units

Tired of candle-lit dinners and evenings, plus early mornings all with no water, and hauling ice to save the fridge contents? I sent out an email to some back-up-powered Skyliners asking about their power unit choices and experiences. I got back a wealth of information. A summary is given here in the following three related sections.

Many of us have been out of power this winter for eight days. Based upon how far the tall firs were bent over, the December storm had our strongest winds in 20 years. This winter has had far more outage days than usual, in spite of PG&E’s extensive tree trimming program. It appears that bankrupt PG&E’s repair response is diminished. Also, those time bombs, the firs and redwood along the highways, are growing 20 or so feet a decade!

**WARNING LABEL:** Safety is the first consideration. Smart people but trained in other disciplines, not familiar with codes or the safety requirements that are known by a licensed professional, have made mistakes, destroying TVs, VCRs, washing machines, or refrigerators. Even worse, some poorly planned back-up power systems have caused fires or electrocution. You can also damage your generator by leaving it on when the PG&E power comes back on. Back-up systems are used infrequently so it is important to have instructions posted where the systems are used. Unless you really know what you are doing, hire a licensed professional. Permits are required for electrical wiring changes. Don’t jeopardize your homeowner’s insurance by neglecting to do this.

### A. Sizing a Power Unit

How much backup power do you need for those few needy days, how much are you willing to spend, and how much fuel are you willing to haul? For me, not much, but for some Skyliners, a lot. I got responses that indicated one person was happy with a 1 kW (kilowatt, 1000 watts, so 10 light bulbs of 100 watts lit up) unit to run her TV and a few lights (no water pump). Most of my powered neighbors were using units of 3, 5, or 10 kW size, though some are as large as 20 kW. **NOTE:** These are continuous power ratings, as used in this article; surge ratings are typically 10+% greater. The 3, 5, and 10 kW sizes typically cost in the range of $1500 - $3000 (all prices are from catalogues, so plus shipping). These are powered by air-cooled engines and operate at a noisy 3600 rpm - too fast for a unit to have long life if you are off the grid, but okay for backup power. All but the smallest units need an electric start, and come with it. The smallest units may only produce 110-volt power, but the medium and large units will produce 110 and 220 volts. Energy sources are usually gasoline, but sometimes propane (see section below). Some Skyliner’s larger power units were gulping up to 25 gallons of fuel a day! If using propane from a 250 gallon tank, that’s 10+% a day.

To figure your power needs use the table in most any library book on alternate energy (different sources have different values). A shortened table of “typical” power requirements for home items is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Operating Watts</th>
<th>Starting Watts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light bulb (100 watt)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereo (avg. volume)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV (25 in. color)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCR</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee maker</td>
<td>900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range, elec., small burner</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range, elec., large burner</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elec. water heater</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Elec. oven</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric blanket</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dish washer</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan, kitchen/bathroom</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrigerator, modern 18 cu ft</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furnace fan (1/3hp)</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water pump, 3/4hp (good condition)</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>3000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CAUTION:** Also check your appliance and pump labels for amps and multiply by 120 volts to get watts. Using an AC clamp-on ammeter is the best way to get the operating current. A horsepower is equivalent to 3/4 of a kilowatt, but use the amps listed on a motor label, particularly pumps. Consider the starting load of motors. Depending upon the quality and condition of the motor, one is likely to need to multiply the motor hp rating by 4 times to 6 times (if older motor) to get the power unit rating in kilowatts to start the motor, particularly a water pump.

Consider a frugal Skyline couple willing to manage (space out) their power consumption while using an auxiliary power unit. What size power unit should they purchase? We will assume they have the usual house around here with propane heating appliances (range, hot water heater, dryer, and furnace) and maybe a wood stove or fireplace insert. If they decide they can get by on typically 6 each 100-watt lights, one refrigerator, a 3/4 hp water pump, and miscellaneous small items such as the kitchen or bath room fan. They would add up the watts: 600(lights) +200(TV) + 300 (fridge) + 3000 (start pump)+ 300 (misc.) = 4400 watts, or 4.4 kW. Only the starting load of the largest motor is listed since with frugal energy management very seldom will two motors start up simultaneously except when the power has been off and the generator is started. When starting, circuit breakers can be managed to eliminate this. If they are willing to do that, then a 5 kW power unit should do fine. Moreover, if they run the refrigerator only during the day (I turned my fridge controls to lower temperature so it would run continuously for several hours, then coast through the night) and minimize the other loads, and occasionally pump water with everything
else turned off, a 3 kW power unit may even be adequate for the very frugal user.

Power needs can often be reduced to fit a smaller power unit. Use low wattage lamps. Also, the water pump for an R/V will run on 12 volts and pump 3 gal/minute at 40 psi! However, if not the frugal type and you have the same propane appliances as above, you may want twice the capability as the first example above, probably a 10 kW size unit. Powering the all-electric house is a challenge that is not considered here. For those large resistance-heating folks, a neighbor with an off-grid ceramics kiln has burned out the armatures on two generators by operating the power unit continuously at capacity.

If you overload the power unit it will stall/quit. You will need to reduce the load and restart. This is usually a small inconvenience, though very hard on the motors and eventually will ‘burn out’ the motors. Power unit ratings, continuous and surge, will generally be for gasoline powered units at sea level. Reduce that rating by 2 - 3% per 1000 feet elevation (more for propane). You are likely to have your generator very lightly loaded much of the time. Of course the larger units have larger appetites during idle and require more expensive hookups (see below). Another concern is the quality of the power generated by the power unit. Use surge protectors for all electronics.

B. Connecting up a Power Unit

For small power needs you may be able to simply stretch extension cords through the house to power up 110-volt plugged-in items, but use cords of PROPER SIZE WIRE and have a proper ground. Undersized wire can overheat and cause a fire. A large cable coming to a central distribution point works well. With all but the smallest units you will most likely want to power up entire circuits in the house. To do this you are required to have installed a transfer switch. This will assure that your power unit cannot possibly feed power back into the grid and severely shock or kill a lineman trying to fix your line. That PG&E transformer works in reverse, taking your 220 volts and transforming it to 24,000 or so volts!

A transfer switch is usually an auxiliary circuit breaker box that gets mounted in a weatherproof enclosure near your main electric entrance servicebox. Some available transfer switches will 1) switch six 120 volt circuits and handle up to a 5 kW power unit, and may have a couple watt meters built in (cost ~$200); 2) switch 8 or 10 circuits (reduce by 1 for each 240 volt circuit) handling up to 7500 watts (~$300). Larger sizes, typically called transfer panels, will handle up to 15 kW power units. The cost of the installation will increase with capacity and may run $1000 or more.

Typically, you have many more circuits in your house than a 6 or 8 circuit transfer switch, which leaves you with only part of your house powered up and still running extension cords about the house. Determine the type of transfer switch and wiring costs to include with the power unit decision. If by chance the house is being rewired with new entrance service, then a 200-amp manual total transfer switch ($600) can be installed between the PG&E meter and the entrance service.

C. Power Unit Fuels, Operation, and Safety

Auxiliary power units typically run on gasoline, but gasoline has major problems. Starting at the gas station with gas cans, even plastic ones, they must be down on the ground with the pump nozzle touching the can when being filled. This is to prevent static electricity sparks. It is difficult to find good gas cans that seal reliably, particularly the plastic ones. Gasoline ages and it is difficult to keep fresh gas in the tank, though an additive will reduce this effect. The power unit is best turned off by turning off the gas line and running out the fuel (though some may remain in the carburetor) to keep varnish from building up in the jets and causing the unit to run roughly.

Filling the typically smaller than desired power unit gasoline tank can lead to spills which can be dangerous upon starting. Also, a real no-no is filling the tank while the engine is running -- it is only a matter of time before you have a fire. Power unit fires are not uncommon. Power units tucked up under the house eve can lead to the whole house burning, so keep the power unit clear of the house and have a defensible space around it - gasoline fires are difficult to fight. A small enclosure over the power unit is unlikely to allow adequate cooling for air-cooled units. Larger gas tanks are sometimes installed on power units, and if you have two tanks tee-ed together it is easy to eventually mess up with the valves and have the higher tank draining into and overflowing the lower tank. Have a dedicated fire extinguisher located on the route to the generator. Diesel fuel is a bit safer.

All this leads one to consider a propane conversion (for ~6kW and larger units) - safer than using gasoline. A few power units have a built-in conversion, changing from either gasoline or propane with the flip of a switch! However, propane units have problems. First, nearly all propane-fueled power units need gaseous propane, but a small tank can’t evaporate enough in cold weather. Our SPUG supplier, Amerigas, states that you need at least a 250-gallon tank to operate a power unit. They were swamped by customer calls during the power outages, customers running low due to their power units! Propane-powered units typically have 10% less power than the same unit powered by gasoline, and the power decrease with altitude, 2 -3% for gasoline, is nearly twice as great for propane. Seemingly contrary to this, propane burns hotter, so only some power units can be converted.

~D. Schwind (with much help)

A good on-line resource for information on generators is: http://www.pge.com/004_safety/outage_safety/outage_home.shtml
San Mateo County Weed Management Area Sponsors One-Day Workshop on Control of Yellow Starthistle

The workshop will be Tuesday, February 4, 2003, at Independence Hall in Woodside (at Woodside Road & Whiskey Hill Road) from 8:30am to 3:30 pm. The cost is $10 per person (includes lunch and handouts).

To confirm a reservation contact John Beall (650363-4700, or JBeall@co.sanmateo.ca.us) by Wednesday, January 29. The program will include information about YST identification and biology, control options, and developing a program for YST control. There will also be a presentation on new weeds in San Mateo County.

The South Skyline Association representative to the San Mateo County WMA is Georgia Stigall. You may reach her at gstigall@aol.com or phone 650-941-1068.

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### Classified Ads

**FOR SALE**

- **MD Barn** - 2 stalls, tack room, overhang and fully equipped $6000.
- **Anderson Frenchwood In-swing Patio Door** - no hardware $500.
- **Echostar Satellite Dish and Receiver** - $100. 408-867-2425
- **Tank** - 500 gallon diesel or gasoline, above ground. $500 OBO. Eric 408-395-6543
- **Forklift** by Philift. in S. San Francisco about 1964! Dual Silicone tires, gas, approx 5 ft. wide, on/off road. Needs eng. and misc. work. $895/trade. 650-851-3181.

**Wanted**

- **Standby generator** wanted--at least 10KW--in good condition, new or used. Call 408-868-1514
- **Skyline E-mail users**: Prevent unwitting spread of viruses. Program your virus protection to monitor OUTGOING mail as well as incoming.

**SERVICES**

- **Alice's Restaurant**
  - Four Corners on Skyline
  - Come meet the new owners. Gourmet dinners from our chef, Ruffino. Full breakfast and luncheon menu. Personable and knowledgeable Maitre D'.
  - 8:30AM-9:00PM daily
  - 7:00PM (Tuesday)
  - (650) 851-0303

- **The Mountain Terrace**
  - (Formerly Skywood Chateau and Boulevard Bar and Grill)
  - Charming and rustic atmosphere uniquely suited to your special occasion. Now available for private events, the Mountain Terrace will open to the public for Sunday brunch in mid-January. For information, call (650) 851-1606

- **House Sitting** – Will watch house and pets, or would like to rent a room or cottage. References avail. Call Christie Close 408-868-0302 or npc@newparentcoach.com

**FREE**

- **Free fir rounds for next winter's fires.** You can even split them on my log splitter. 408/867-9422

**Local Pet Line Now Available for Lost Pets**

If you need help finding a lost pet, or locating the owners of a found pet, the new SSA PetLine might be able to help. Give us a description or photo, name of pet, area where pet was last seen, and a contact number. A notice will be posted on the SSA website for 2 weeks. The posting can be extended upon request. Call or write the SSA PetLine in care of Patti Begley, 408-867-3973, SkylinesEditor@earthlink.net or 26160 Highway 9, Los Gatos, CA 95033.

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**Skylines Is Published Once A Quarter**

Skylines invites individuals to submit articles and artwork.

**Policy on Classified Ads:** Ads are free to SSA members. No continuing ads will be accepted. They must be resubmitted for each issue. Deadline dates are July 1, October 1, January 1, and April 1.

**Skylines News Articles:** The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue is March 23, 2003.

**Send all ads and articles to:** Patti Begley, 26160 Highway 9, Los Gatos, CA 95033, or SkylinesEditor@earthlink.net

We reserve the right to edit all submissions. We assume no responsibility for omissions, incorrect information or personal opinions.

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**SSA Calendar**

**General Meeting** – January 31, 7:00 pm at CDF Saratoga Fire Station

**Business Meetings at 7:15 pm:**

- Thurs. Jan 16 – Bill Fowkes
- Thurs. Feb 6 – TBD
- Thurs. Mar 6 – Ruth Waldhauer
  (Call Pat Congdon for location and directions)
- President Pat Congdon 650-941-9832
- Editor Patti Begley 408-867-3973