



Skylines

SSA Speaker Series

The Challenges of Beekeeping in Our Rural Area

PRESENTER: HANS JOHSENS

Hans Johsens has lived in the South Skyline community for nearly all his 60 years. Hans began keeping bees as a child with his father on Black Road in the 1970's. Altogether, Hans has around 45 years' experience in beekeeping.

The presentation will cover the challenges of keeping bees in a rural area touching on considerations to keep in mind if you are thinking about keeping bees, bee biology, the products of the hive and where to get supplies. There will be some time after the talk to answer questions from the audience. Hans will also be available afterwards.



Friday, January 30, 2026

TIME 7:00 pm – Refreshments
7:30 pm – SSA Board Elections followed by the featured presentation and Q&A. Due to unreliable internet there will be no option for a Zoom meeting at this time. Please come and join us in person!

PLACE Saratoga CDF Summit Fire Station
12900 Skyline Blvd.

Directions: Located on the west side of Skyline Blvd. approximately .6 of a mile north of the intersection of Skyline Blvd. and Highway 9.

Note: Parking at the fire station is limited; there is more parking across Highway 9. Be safe, use a flashlight.

Please bring a sweet or savory dessert to share.
SSA will provide beverages.

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SSA Grant Application Deadline: March 31, 2026

BY SUSAN STUCKEY

Will you need financial assistance for a program or project that supports the South Skyline community? Individuals, students, teachers, groups, and organizations are eligible for South Skyline Association grant funding. **The deadline for submitting grant applications to the SSA is March 31, 2026.**

Please check the SSA website under 'Events' at <http://southskyline.org/events/> for the application template. If you have any questions or need additional information or assistance with the grant proposal application, please email membership@southskyline.org. Applications will be reviewed at the April 09, 2026 SSA board meeting.

SSA Board Elections

Board Positions Are Available

Elections for South Skyline Association board members will be held at the winter quarterly event at the Saratoga Summit Fire Station on January 30, 2026.. Board members serve two-year terms, staggered so terms expire each year for approximately half of the board. This time, all board members whose terms are expiring are running for re-election.

That slate is:

Barbara Bekins, Treasurer

Evan Dellor, Vice President

Udy Gold, President

Rich Lee, Chief Fun Officer

Susan Stucky, Grants Administrator

plus one open seat.

Elections are by voice vote at the meeting.

SPUG Quarterly Report

Month/Year	Amerigas	Ferrellgas	Kamps	Suburban/SV
December 2025	2.750	2.944	3.362	4.520
November 2025	2.750	2.911	3.190	4.520
October 2025	2.750	2.849	3.190	4.520
September 2025	2.750	2.742	3.190	4.520
August 2025	2.750	2.785	3.510	4.520
July 2025	2.750	2.809	3.510	4.520
June 2025	2.750	2.801	3.510	4.520
May 2025	2.750	2.977	3.510	4.520
April 2025	2.750	2.977	3.510	4.520
March 2025	2.750	3.252	3.510	4.630
February 2025	2.750	3.275	3.510	4.630
January 2025	2.750	3.151	3.510	4.630
December 2024	2.750	3.049	3.410	4.630

Skyline Propane Users Group (SPUG) was formed to benefit SSA members. For information about joining, or current information on the SPUG agreement go to our website: www.SouthSkyline.org/spug/. If you have questions, please email propane@southskyline.org.

SSA has agreements with Amerigas, Ferrellgas, Kamps, and Suburban Propane Scotts Valley. The open market price is more than \$1.00/gallon higher than the SPUG price. **Please note:** Prices are subject to change as frequently as wholesale prices change. The prices SSA posts are for the first of the month. Our SPUG rate is based on a keep-full basis, not will-call service.

You are not required to pay sales tax on propane if you do not have natural gas available where you use propane. If you get your propane from Amerigas, you will need to submit a sales tax exemption form. Contact Amerigas for the form.

We are currently upgrading the membership functions on our website. All SPUG discounts will remain in place until our online payment system is complete. Watch for notifications when members will be able to renew memberships again online. Or, you check our progress on the website at South Skyline Association.

South Skyline Fire & Rescue News

BY ANDY SEIGEL, CAPTAIN, SSF&R

Happy New Year, South Skyline! For the third year in a row, we set a new record for call volume in the fiscal year ending October 31st. We had 294 requests for service, up about 8% from the previous year. Most of the increase was in vehicle accidents. It has been very quiet since November 1.

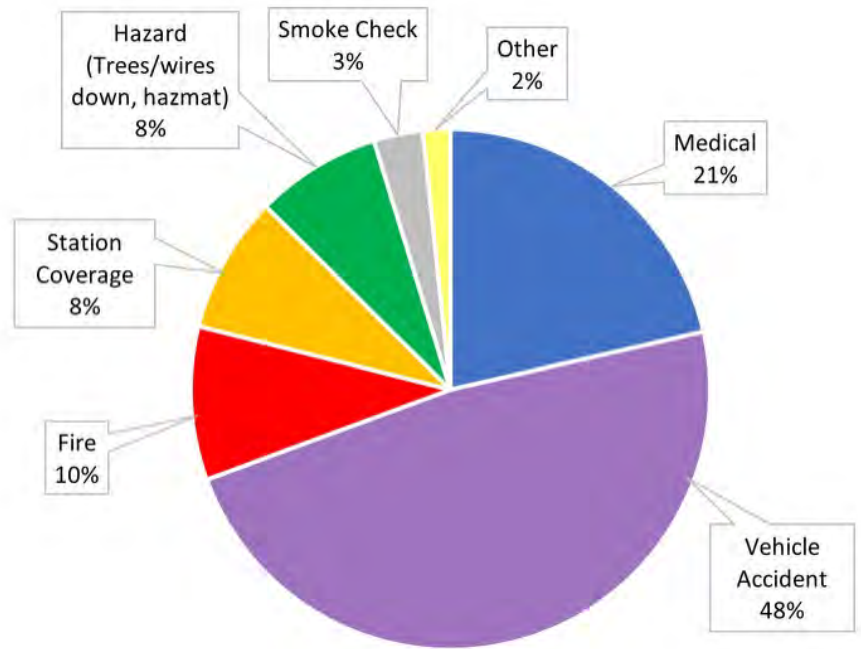
In October, we were able to provide water support for two prescribed burns: one off Empire Grade, the other in the Soquel Demo Forest.

We are recruiting year-round now and are very much in need of new firefighters. As we have none in the 2026 academy, recruiting this year is even more important.

Backyard Burn Changes

Effective December 1, 2025, any resident in the unincorporated areas of Santa Cruz County who wishes to conduct a backyard burn will need a CAL FIRE Residential Burn Permit prior to burning. The complete news release is posted on our website under News along with a link to a video which discusses the permit process. San Mateo and Santa Clara County residents should check with their local CAL FIRE station as these counties are not covered by this policy.

As always, if you see smoke where it doesn't belong, do not hesitate to call 911.



Water Tender Update

The contract with Burton's Fire in Modesto has been signed, and I should be headed to South Dakota soon for a pre-construction meeting to finalize the build. With your very generous support (including a grant from the SSA), our non-profit managed to raise about \$70,000 to assist with the purchase.

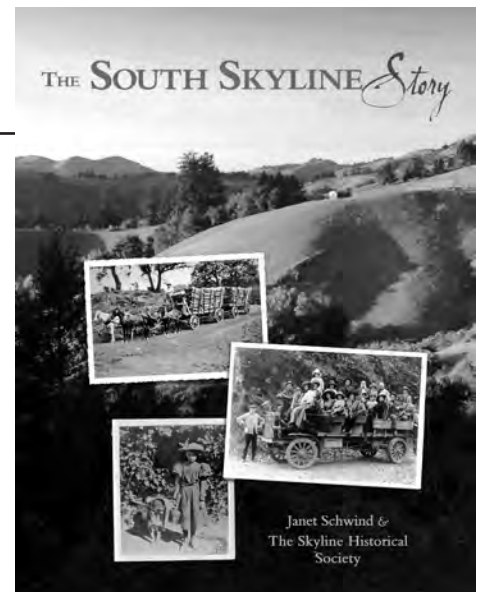
Visit us at: <http://southskylinefire.org>

"The South Skyline Story" is Almost Sold Out

The local history book, "The South Skyline Story" is no longer available for purchase from the Skyline History President, Chuck Shoppe. Most of the inventory has been sold.

Any remaining copies might be available at Alice's Restaurant gift shop, or the Saratoga Museum and San Lorenzo Valley Museum gift shops.

A big thank you to Chuck for the years of managing the sales of this book, and to Janet Schwind and the Skyline Historical Society for writing and compiling this wonderful biography of our scenic Skyline region.



What Do You Mean, Fire Safe?

BY LARRY WATSON, BOARD MEMBER SOUTH SKYLINE FIRE SAFE COUNCIL (SSFSC)

In This Article

1. News
2. The Las Cumbres Holiday Bazaar
3. Our 2026 Ongoing Programs to Benefit You
4. Managing your Defensible Space through the Seasons: Winter

1. South Skyline FireSafe Council News

Sadly, our FireSafe Council Board is losing three members: The Board of SSFSC is so pleased that Nikki Hanson has returned as a Board Member. You may not know that our Board also currently includes Jane Manning, Guy Lalonde, John DeLong, John Drew, Monty Boyer, and Larry Watson. Perhaps you know one or more of these neighbors but do not know that they are volunteers serving our greater community. You can ask them about why they volunteer to SSFSC, or contact any of them through our email SouthSkylineFiresafe@gmail.com. We have two Board Member vacancies.

2. The Las Cumbres Holiday Bazaar

This annual event was a great success and contributes thousands of dollars each year to support SSFSC's ongoing projects. We truly appreciate Vicky Perkins and all the other volunteers that produce this event that also benefits the South Skyline Emergency Preparedness Organization and South Skyline Fire and Rescue.

3. South Skyline FireSafe Council Programs to Benefit Our Community

• Fall Chipping Program

Participation in our Chipping Program was great, 56 homes. Look for the announcement of our Spring Chipping program. For more details go to <https://www.southskylinefiresafe.org/programs-2/free-chipping-program/>

• Community Fuel Reduction reimbursements

SSFSC has a small reimbursement program for Fuel Reduction clearing in our budget. This allows groups of residents or road associations to ask for funds to help defray emergency egress costs. For more information email SouthSkylineFiresafe@gmail.com.

• Home Advisory

Upon request, a SSFSC volunteer will visit your site for a free guided and confidential walk-through to provide real-time feedback and address any property-specific

questions related to Home Hardening and Defensible Space. We use a simple form for the advisory you can download <https://www.southskylinefiresafe.org/programs-2/home-advisory-program/>.

4. Managing your Defensible Space in the Winter.

We discussed harvesting the biomass from your defensible space in the last issue of Skylines and the annual cycle of pruning, thinning and mowing. For me, winter is the season for burning that material both indoors and outdoors.

• Outdoor Burning

For those in Santa Cruz County who may be able to participate in the Backyard Burning Program, there is a change this year. There is the annual permit from the Monterey Bay Air Resource District (<https://portal.laserfiche.com/x4671/forms/BYBPermit>). And now a CAL FIRE permit is required (<https://burnpermit.fire.ca.gov/>) with details here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICYgp6LwFPE>.

• Indoor Burning

Burning wood collected from your defensible space, when done safely under healthy conditions and when permitted can make space heating less expensive and at least carbon-neutral, or even carbon-negative when it replaces or supplements propane or grid power. However, I am only suggesting this be done in a modern compliant woodstove that utilizes only outside air for combustion.

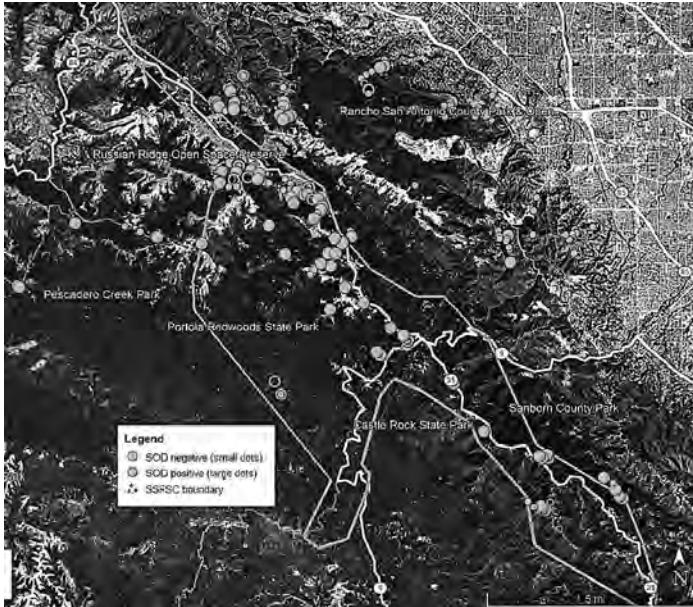


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Sudden Oak Death News

BY JANE MANNING

Volunteers who participate in the annual Sudden Oak Death (SOD) blitz train online to learn to spot SOD infection symptoms on bay laurels because this very prevalent tree species is the most important vector of SOD. When the bay infection rate is high, nearby oaks are more vulnerable.



Spring 2025 SOD blitz results in and around the South Skyline FireSafe Council boundaries. Large dots on the map were SOD-positive; small dots SOD-negative. (The hollow dots had a visibly ailing oak nearby). Image created using Google Earth (accessed on 12/08/2025).

Bay leaves were collected in spring 2025 by hundreds of volunteers across the state, including many around the

South Skyline area in early May. A huge THANK YOU to all who participated to help monitor this impactful oak disease!

The 2025 results, available under the SOD drop-down at www.matteolab.org, were obtained via genetically testing the majority of samples collected. The wetter weather over the past few years has generally increased infection rates, including in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The map shows that the majority of 2025 blitz samples in the South Skyline area were SOD-positive. The new NA2 strain of the SOD organism expanded its range in 2025; the nearest NA2 zone to us is around Filoli. NA2 appears to be more drought-tolerant, which could drive oak infection even in drier years. Be wary of nursery material from NA2-infected zones!

The Matteo lab has doubled down on recommending limbing and thinning of forested areas around oaks to discourage the pathogen, which depends on water to proliferate. A less humid understory is less hospitable to SOD. These activities also create a safer, more wildfire resilient defensible space and/or escape route. Finally, avoid soil disturbance during the wet season, clean your equipment, and evaluate having an arborist help with oak pre-treatment according to guidelines found at the website above. Funding for programs such as the SOD blitz has been hit hard, so please consider donating any amount to the Lab at the above website. To learn how to volunteer, contact skyline_sod@yahoo.com

FIRE SAFE CONTINUATION

Why outside air combustion is important or required in many places:

- **Airtight Homes:** Modern, energy-efficient homes are so sealed that wood stoves can't draw enough air from the room, leading to poor burns and more smoke.
- **Efficiency & Emissions:** Outside air kits provide a dedicated, consistent air supply, allowing stoves to burn cleaner and more efficiently, meeting EPA standards for new stoves.

- **Indoor Air Quality:** Prevents carbon monoxide and fine particulate matter from being pulled into the living space.
- **Win-Win:** Allows conversion of potential wildfire fuel into heat energy to supplement/reduce/replace propane or grid power for space heating.

Advanced Resource Centers (ARCs)

BY CHIEF ARI DELAY, LA HONDA FIRE BRIGADE

The La Honda Fire Brigade is Proud to Announce the Coming of the ARC



LA HONDA FIRE BRIGADE
FIRE • RESCUE • EMS



ADVANCE RESOURCE CENTER
ARC



Service • Leadership • Teamwork • Safety and Preparedness • Professionalism • Integrity

Advanced Resource Centers Strengthening Disaster Resilience for South Coast Communities

Introduction

The La Honda & Kings Mountain Fire Brigades are proud to introduce the **Advanced Resource Centers (ARCs)**—fully self-contained disaster response units strategically positioned to serve our South Coast communities. These innovative facilities represent a significant advancement in local emergency preparedness, designed to support community resilience during the critical first 72 hours following a disaster.

Funded by The County of San Mateo through measure K funds, ARCs serve five communities across San Mateo County's foothill region: **La Honda, Loma Mar, Kings Mountain, Middleton Tract, and Pescadero**. Each unit is equipped identically to ensure consistency, reliability, and ease of operation during high-stress emergency situations. A special thanks goes to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors for supporting the project through measure K, The La Honda & Kings Mountain Fire Brigade Board of Directors and Firefighters and the technical team of Peter Chupity, Casey Dunn and Ari Delay Fire Chief from the La Honda Fire Brigade who have designed and built the ARCs with the dedicated support of the volunteer workforce who tirelessly worked on the project.

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What is an ARC?

An Advanced Resource Center is a fully self-contained unit housing critical disaster supplies, emergency communications systems, and operational equipment necessary for a CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) to support a community during extended emergencies. Each ARC is designed as a known, reliable location where residents can access help, make emergency communications, and connect with trained responders—even when traditional infrastructure fails.

Key ARC capabilities include:

- Internal backup power through solar panels and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)
- Advanced emergency communications: Starlink internet, WiFi, Ham Radio, and APRS
- Weather monitoring station and Air Quality Index (AQI) sensors
- Disaster medical supplies including AEDs, Stop the Bleed kits, and PPE
- Light search and rescue equipment
- Fire control supplies and equipment

Why Do We Need ARCs?

Our rural communities face unique challenges during disasters. Remote locations, limited road access, and the potential for communication failures make it essential to have local resources immediately available. The ARCs address these challenges by:

- Providing reliable emergency communications through redundant communication paths when traditional systems fail

- Storing essential tools and equipment locally, reducing the need to gather and transport life-saving equipment into communities during critical first hours
- Establishing a known location where residents can go for help and emergency communications
- Enabling remote activation and monitoring when public safety officials are task-saturated with emergency response

Inside the ARC: Three Operational Areas

Each ARC is organized into three distinct operational areas, each designed to support specific emergency response functions. Community members and volunteers will have opportunities to receive training in all three areas.

The Technical Room: Power & Communications Infrastructure

The Technical Room serves as the heart of the ARC's power generation and monitoring systems. This area houses the technology that enables the ARC to operate independently of the grid for extended periods.

Power Systems:

- Roof-mounted solar panels for renewable energy generation
- Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) for reliable backup power
- Generator backup for extended outage scenarios
- DC and AC power distribution systems
- Inverter technology for power conversion and management

Monitoring & Communications:

- Ham Radio base station for amateur radio communications
- APRS (Automatic Packet Reporting System) for location and status tracking
- Weather station providing real-time local conditions
- Air Quality Index (AQI) monitoring—critical during wildfire events

Remote control and monitoring capabilities for equipment management The Equipment Room houses the advanced networking and connectivity infrastructure that enables the ARC to maintain communications with the outside world and support secure operations.

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Connectivity Systems:

- **Starlink Satellite Internet:** High-speed internet connectivity independent of terrestrial infrastructure
- **WiFi Network:** Local wireless network for responders and community access
- **Network Infrastructure:** Enterprise-grade networking equipment for reliable communications

Technical Infrastructure:

- **MQTT Integration:** Message queuing protocol for efficient sensor data communication and IoT device management
- **Door Access Control:** Secure access systems for controlled entry and monitoring

The Incident Command Post Room (ICP): Operations & Community Interface

The Incident Command Post (ICP) Room serves as the operational center during emergency activations. This space is designed to support coordinated response efforts between CERT teams, Ham radio operators, fire personnel, and community members.

Operational Functions:

- Coordination hub for CERT, Ham radio, and fire operations
- Community interface point for residents seeking assistance
- Public information station for emergency updates and guidance
- Local leadership coordination during disaster response

Emergency Supplies & Equipment Caches:

- **Disaster Medical Supplies:** Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs), Stop the Bleed kits, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)



- **Search and Rescue Equipment:** Light search and rescue tools for immediate response operations
- **Fire Control Equipment:** Essential supplies for initial fire response and containment

The Equipment Room: Advanced Connectivity & Security Community Engagement & Training

The ARCs represent more than infrastructure—they embody our commitment to community resilience. We encourage all community members to familiarize themselves with their local ARC and consider participating in training opportunities after becoming trained in CERT.

Orientation training sessions are organized in 20-minute rotations covering each of the three operational areas, ensuring that every participant gains comprehensive knowledge of ARC capabilities and operations. Whether you're interested in technical systems, emergency operations, or community coordination, there's a role for everyone in our disaster preparedness efforts.

Looking Ahead

The Advanced Resource Centers represent a significant investment in our communities' safety and resilience. As we continue to develop and refine these facilities, we remain committed to ensuring that La Honda, Loma Mar, Kings Mountain, Middleton Tract, and Pescadero are prepared to face whatever challenges may come.

For more information about the ARCs or to get involved with emergency preparedness efforts in your community, please contact the La Honda Fire Brigade.



Together, we build resilient communities.

Goldback Fern Shines from Underneath

BY SARAH SCHOEN, PHOTOS BY DAVID SCHOEN

Goldback fern is a small member of the Brake Family (Pteridaceae). It has triangular fronds and can grow individually or in small colonies.

Underground are short rhizomes with blackish scales. From these grow reddish brown to brown to black stipes (stems) which are smooth and wirey.

The fronds themselves are the most striking. They are featherlike (pinnate), green and smooth on the upper surface. But look on the underside, and the surface is yellow. This is because tiny glands exude a waxy substance to help retain moisture. Spores, appearing June-August on the undersides are darker golden. They are arranged along minor veins in sporangia. The sporangia are not in clusters called sori and not covered with an infusium like many other local ferns. Being especially exposed to the elements, the waxy exudate helps keep the spores protected.



Frond underside

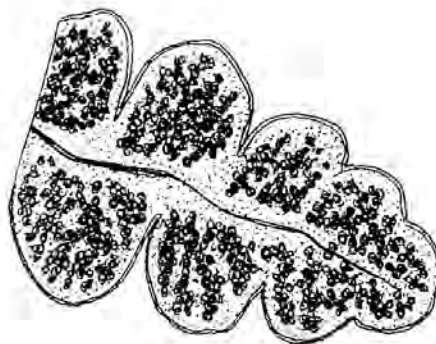
Goldback fern is adapted to summer drought by the fronds curling up when drying out. During this time the stomata are closed and the plant becomes dormant. The spores are on the outside of the curls. When winter

rains resume, the fronds may uncurl and new fronds may emerge. This method of conserving energy and resources is called resurrection.



Fronds in Winter

Goldback ferns were used medicinally as an analgesic by some indigenous Californians. The Karok used goldback fern to treat the pain from childbirth, while the Miwok used the same fern to treat toothaches. The underside of the leaf can be slapped against clothing or skin to create temporary body art, a copy of the frond itself. There is no need to pick the frond first.



Underside of Upper Frond With Sporangia (Becking 1982)



Goldback Fern (Becking 1982)

Goldback fern is found from British Columbia south to Baja California and the western U.S. below 7000'. It grows in open woodlands, on forest edges, chaparral, and rocky edges of roads and trails. It prefers well-drained soil and at least partial shade. A related plant, silverback fern (*P. pallida*) has white undersides and is found in the Sierra foothills below 3600'.

Take a Hike: Four New Trails Open in La Honda Creek Open Space

BY JOANNE IRWIN



On November 8, four new trails opened in La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve. The new Coho Vista, Western Meadowlark, Lone Madrone, and Lonely Forest trails add 6 more miles of multi-use trails to one of the largest and most diverse preserves in the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District. The new trails connect existing trails in the upper and lower portions of the preserve, creating one trail system that offers more than 17 miles to explore.

Mountain bikers are particularly pleased. The new trails provide mountain bike access to the preserve for the first time. Starting from the Sears Ranch Road parking area, cyclists can ride Harrington Creek Trail to the new Lonely Forest Trail, climb up the new Western Meadowlark Trail, take in the views on portions of the new Coho Vista trail, then return the way they came for a challenging out-and-back ride totaling 11.2 miles. Western Meadowlark and Coho Vista trails have some steep sections, adding up to nearly 900 feet of elevation change.

Petra Goodman and Veronica Chouinard took advantage of a break in the rain in early November and biked this route on their first mountain bike trip in the preserve. "I like the different scenery, the grasslands, the forest," said Goodman. "I'm sure I'll come back in the spring when it's not so muddy and enjoy the gorgeous killer views." Chouinard added, "We're really lucky that this is our backyard!"

The Western Meadowlark Trail meanders through second-growth redwood forest, accented by the lush beauty of ferns and Redwood sorrel. Come spring, you'll see blooms like Trillium, Pacific Starflower, and Woodland strawberry.

Lynn Gail hiked the Western Meadowlark Trail soon after it opened in November. While resting in a circle of redwoods, she captured the feelings of many hikers when she exclaimed, "Isn't this glorious!?"

Equestrians and hikers, but not bikes, are allowed on the new Lone Madrone Trail. Portions of this trail are very steep. Those who make the climb are rewarded with sweeping views of the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Pacific Ocean.

While traversing the new Lonely Forest Trail, you may be surprised to come face to face with a cow near the path.

La Honda Creek Preserve is one of two preserves



that has a unique partnership with local cattle ranchers. Through Midpen's Conservation Grazing program, ranchers and rangers use cattle to enhance and improve the preserve's biodiversity and limit wildfire risk by reducing fuel loads. Rangers advise: Use common sense while hiking near cattle. Keep your distance. Do not try to touch them. Walk around them if they are on the path, allowing plenty of space. Be sure not to get between a calf and its mother. When you walk through a pedestrian gate, close it after you to ensure cows remain in the proper pasture. Leave larger vehicle gates as you find them, open or closed. These larger gates will normally be left open when cattle are moving between pastures.

Hikers can also enter the upper portion of the preserve by using the permit-only parking area along Allen Road*, off Bear Gulch Road. Parking is limited, and you must obtain a free parking permit in advance from the Midpen website at <https://www.openspace.org/where-to-go/permits>. While it is easy to get a permit, some hikers had difficulty finding the correct lock on the gate. Hikers sharing tips on the All Trails app offer this advice: find the lock with the green tape on it, enter the code and push hard; the lock will pop open. Many hikers report that they were the only people on the trail while they were there.

For the most direct route from the Allen Road trailhead to the newly opened trails, take the Coho Vista Loop trail

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past the white barn to the Coho Vista trail (0.6 miles). Keep to your left and proceed to the vista point (0.5). The portion of the Coho Vista Trail beyond the vista point is all new. Within a mile, this moderately steep trail will take you to the junction of the new Western Meadowlark Trail and the new Lone Madrone Trail. Together, these two trails form a 2.2-mile loop. Be prepared to climb on your return trip—you will have descended a total of 1,289 feet from the Allen Road trailhead.

Whether you access the new trails at La Honda Creek Open Space from the Sears Ranch Road main lot near La Honda, or the Allen Rd permit lot off Bear Gulch Road, you will want to set aside at least three hours for your adventure. The new trails are in the heart of the preserve, and you'll hike/ride/bike a mile before you reach the recently opened pathways.

For directions to the two trailheads, or to secure a parking permit, go to <https://www.openspace.org/preserves/la-honda-creek>.

- Note: When navigating to the Allen Road Permit Lot, there are two Allen Roads near Skyline Blvd., and they do NOT connect. You need to approach Allen Road from Bear Gulch Road, not from Skyline. If using Google Maps, enter "La Honda Creek Allen Road Permit Lot" in your search or use this: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/kFSPvYqqoyX6by7h8>

Midpen's Trail Explorer App Helps You Find the Perfect Trail

Three years in the making, the Midpen Trail Explorer app provides very useful information about every trail in every preserve in the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District. App users can check how steep a trail gets, whether it is shady or sunny, and which trails are open to horses, bikes, or dogs. You can use filters to provide information on a trail's surface type, cross-slope, width, and the accessibility rating. When looking at a trail in the app you can click on different sections of a trail to see a pop-up that describes that part of the trail in even greater detail.

You can access the app by searching Midpeninsula Trail Explorer or follow this link:

<https://opendata-mrostd.hub.arcgis.com/pages/find-the-right-trail>



The Trail Explorer App uses a color-coded system to show you how steep or flat different sections of the trail are.

Donkeys in the Dust:

An Uplifting Tale from the Santa Cruz Mountains to the High Sierra trails

BY WILL WYMAN

How did the son of a cavalry officer fall in love with a long-eared but short-legged equine named Pegasus? No, this is not a modern adaptation of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, but rather a true story about a little orphaned donkey who was rescued from the side of Highway 35, and who became the unlikely hero and trail-wise leader of delightful summer sojourns and pack trips in the High Sierra.

When I was a young boy, Sunday mornings were special and something I looked forward to all week. A chance to sit in my dad's lap and drive the noisy old '65 VW bug down a 2-mile dirt road and head another 6 miles north on Highway 35 into town to pick up the Sunday Times. And, if I'd done all my chores, I could get a candy bar and a soda with the shiny and heavy quarter my dad flipped my way.

Yet, little did we know that on the way home on this particular day, our lives would be forever changed by a funny furry sight. What was that fuzzy little animal doing, rolling in the dust on the side of Skyline Boulevard? And what kind of animal was it? About the size of a large dog, but with shiny black hooves, a stylish looking gray coat, accented with distinctive dark dorsal stripes and transverse dark stripes on the shoulders that can create the appearance of a cross, which lead some people to believe the cute little beasts of burden are blessed by God.

Once very popular forms of transportation, even written up in glowing terms in the bible, for helping deliver the Mother of the "King



of Kings" to a cozy little manger, donkeys are no longer preferred or even required in our modern civilization to get people from point A to point B. But as luck would have it, my dear father had other ideas...

But first, how about a kick start on the relatively recent history of these rather cute and curious critters. North American donkeys today constitute approximately 0.1% of the worldwide donkey population of 41M. There are numerous variations around the world, about 185 breeds in fact, but there are only five breeds in North America. Donkeys were originally brought from Europe to the New World in the fifteenth century with the Second Voyage of Christopher Columbus.

The first presence of donkeys in what is now the United States is sometimes reported to date from 1679, when a Jesuit priest named Eusebio Kino took some from Sonora in Spanish Mexico to a new mission at San Xavier del Bac in what is now Arizona. Donkeys arrived in large numbers in the western United States

during the gold rushes of the nineteenth century, as pack animals and for use in mines and ore-grinding mills. The major use of donkeys came to an end with the end of the mining boom and the introduction of railroads in the West. With little value, many animals were turned loose to become the populations of free-roaming burros that inhabit the West today. And that was indeed how we came upon this wiggling little ball of fuzz kicking up dust on the side of the road.

Fortunately, on that day's trip to the corner store in Skylonda we had picked up some sugar cubes for coffee, which came in handy on the way home. We did a double take at the sight, and my dad blurted out, "Dang, take a look at that, little Bill, ain't that a nice little ass?!?!?" I couldn't really make it out, as the dust was flying, but when my Dad quickly put on the brakes and swerved to the shoulder to pull over, the donkey started to make the funniest sound, braying loudly while walking slowly towards us. My Dad reached into the grocery bag, ripped open the

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pink C&H box, grabbed a handful of the sugar cubes and quietly got out of the VW bug and took his belt off. Which of course alarmed me just a bit!

I heard him beckon softly and sweetly, "Come on... Come on..." and then he put out his hand with a few sugar cubes in it, and without any hesitation the little donkey trotted right up to him for a sniff and a taste. Then before I could get out of the passenger seat my father quickly wrapped his belt around the neck of the lil' burrito and cajoled the big-eared ball of fuzz into the VW's back seat with the help of some strategically placed sugar cubes.

Now that lil' donkey's brown eyes got bigger and bigger while he continued to bray louder and louder, then after a few more sugar cubes his cries became softer and softer, as he fit snugly in the bug's back seats and seemed quite happy with such a soft place to rest his ass! What a sweet lil' critter he was, and he loved to sniff my sweets, too... Milk Duds they're called, but they weren't duds with our lil' donkey. He chewed on those happily as we rolled on a few more miles southbound on Highway 35 until we pulled off onto the dusty Rapley Ranch Road and soon arrived at the Halfway House...

Then we had to unload him and turn him out in the corral with the pony Sam, the big horse, Red, and the black stallion, Nightmare, who started kicking up a dust storm as he clearly wasn't too happy to see our long eared lil' furry friend... So, rather than cause a commotion, my father suggested we invite our new furry friend into the fenced garden area, where he wouldn't get kicked around by the big equestrian welcoming committee.

Our Sunday Brunch suddenly became quite a spectacle, with that little donkey leaning into the house and nudging up the window with his sensitive nose. Then he offered a warm toothy smile, for he could smell the sweet maple syrup on the table. And that was all he wanted, not the flapjacks, not the bacon, just the sweet syrup...

And sweet it was... We decided to name him Pegasus on account of how he flew into our lives. He was truly a happy and healthy little donkey, And once word got around South Skyline that we had rescued a big-eared four-legged furry beast, all of a sudden people were loading their lonely noisy donkeys into their trailers or the back of their trucks and heading up the hill for Alice's Restaurant, where they'd stop for a beer and ask where the donkey rustler was...

Well, he was just down the road a piece, at the Halfway



The author with his father packing up Mahalia, working on a diamond hitch, before heading out on the trail...

House on Rapley Ranch Road that stood watch on the dilapidated historic ol' Stagecoach Saloon, scheming on a novel idea, tired of teaching English to Junior high school boys. Why not stretch for the stars and apply to grad school at Stanford? And so, he did, perhaps feeling ambitious and well-fortified having poured himself some scotch on the rocks, And, a few months later, to his surprise, his application was accepted.

"Oh shit! Now how the hell am I going to pay the damn tuition?" my father exclaimed. And then to his surprise, a donkey started braying, and that must have triggered a wild notion. Since we rescued Pegasus from the side of the road, we'd had a half dozen donkeys appear at various times of the day and even in the middle of the night.

After Pegasus came Hogan, strong as an ox, then old and gray Jose, followed by the exotic looking dark brown Mahalia, then lovely leggy Julep, then skittish Poncho, and finally Silver, who arrived as a reject from a petting zoo, as he took one too many bites out of the patrons.

How we got them all into a few pickup trucks and up into the High Sierra is another circuitous and miraculous story, to say the least, which I hope to share with you another day. In the meantime, I think perhaps it's time to keep digging up and dusting off yet more tales about navigating a packstring of intrepid donkeys tied nose to tail up rugged rocky trails over mountain passes. Seems like another lifetime ago...

The Skylines team encourages creative contributions from our readers, such as the memoir/short story above. If you wish to share experiences of life in these mountains through stories, artwork or photos send them to skylineseditor@yahoo.com.

New Wildlife Care Facility on Highway 9

BY PATTI BEGLEY

In March 2025 the Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA (PHS/SPCA) opened a new wildlife rescue facility on Congress Springs Road in Saratoga. It is the [Larry Ellison Conservation Center for Wildlife Care](#). It's easy to miss as you navigate down Highway 9, but it is located between Booker Creek Road and Savannah-Chanelle Vineyards.

Injured or orphaned wildlife can be dropped off at the at the intake center located at 24103 Congress Springs Road, open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The 197-acre facility has several nurseries and enclosures to help birds, mammals and other species recover. Seabirds also have their own enclosures with ponds and space for them to fly. The center is designed to help sick, injured, and orphaned native animals get back to the wild, with public drop-off at this local intake building. However, their website states that the center takes in all wildlife, whether the animal is native, exotic, endangered or threatened.

Here is some key information for drop-off:

- **Location:** 24103 Congress Springs Road, Saratoga, CA.
- **Hours:** 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., 7 days a week. Closed on holidays.
- **Phone:** 650-340-7022
- **What to Do:**
 - Place the animal in a small, covered box (like a shoebox) lined with a tissue or paper towel.
 - Keep it warm, dark, and quiet to minimize stress.
 - **Do NOT give food or water.**
 - Fill out paperwork at the intake center detailing where and when you found the animal and what happened.



Animal Guidelines:

- **Small Animals:** The public is encouraged to bring in small animals like songbirds, squirrels, and baby wildlife.
- **Large Species:** For larger animals such as bobcats, coyotes, raccoons, owls, or eagles, the public is advised to contact local animal control agencies for safe transport to the center.
- **Restricted Species:** The center does **not** accept deer or mountain lions, which remain under the management of the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

A Mountain New Year's Blessing

BY PATTI BEGLEY

*May your feet take you down your favorite trail
Over grassy hills with coveys of quail
Past swollen streams edged with fern
Through madrone and fir at every turn
May you delight at the sight of a small gray squirrel
Or the beauty of moss on a redwood burl
May you take pleasure in every bird and bug
May you not slip on a fat banana slug.*



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When placing an ad: Please limit each ad to 45 words. Due to many requests, we will attempt to keep a list of ads that will run every issue. However, there is no guarantee that an ad won't be missed because of our changes in staff. If you want to be on the list, make a request to "run until canceled." It is best to resubmit ads for each issue. Next deadline:

March 1, 2026.

Classified Ads are free for SSA members. Membership is \$20 per year. The online SSA membership application is at www.southskyline.org. Email ads to: skylineseditor@yahoo.com

SSA Calendar 2026 Monthly SSA Board Meetings 7:00pm

February 12
March 12
April 9

For further updates
contact Udy Gold:
president@southskyline.org

Current SSA Board Members

Dave Anderson	Highway 9 – Santa Cruz County	Webmaster, Public Safety
Patti Begley	Highway 9 – Santa Cruz County	Skylines Editor, Website Committee
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Board positions are available.

Contact Udy Gold – president@southskyline.org

Skylines Ads and News Articles

The deadline for submitting ads and articles for the next issue is **March 1, 2026**

Skylines is published once a quarter: January/April/July/October

Skylines invites individuals to submit articles and artwork.

Policy on Classified Ads: Limit ads to 45 words. Free for SSA members.

Send all ads and articles to: SkylinesEditor@yahoo.com

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