

Earl's Diary - Tuesday - April 29, 2014

Dear Loyal Readers, wherever you may be,

Imagine my surprise when fellow "cult" members Bill and Martha from Fort Bragg pulled in right across the road from me!



They are also on the road to King City and the gathering. I forgot to tell you yesterday that I had another surprise. Just as I pulled into the visitor center, Karen, from Arroyo Grande, CA was also registering for a two night stay in her 1981 Casita. She was parked right next to me.



Gee, that makes our little part of the loop "molded fiberglassville"!

Today is an exploration day of Pinnacles National Park. From the campground, one does not see the interesting rock formations. To do that a two mile drive up the road is necessary. I wasn't sure what I was going to see as I approached the Bear Creek Nature Center. It soon became clear that the rocky crags were clearly visible. Of course, the Nature Center was closed. Why?? Who knows?



You have to understand that Pinnacles is clearly a hikers paradise. Pinnacles National Park has more than 30 miles of trails that showcase the beauty of the park up close and personal. Hikes range from flat stretches of grasslands to uphill climbs through talus caves and onward to the rocky spires that Pinnacles is famous for.



To see the rock formations from a distance is interesting. To get up and close takes some serious uphill hiking. I am no longer a distance hiker. A more accurate description would be slow walker. I chose to take the Condor Gulch Trail that promised good views of the crags after a ten minute walk. Sure enough. They were in plain sight off in the distance!



The national park is divided by the rock formations into East and West Divisions, connected by foot trails; there is no through road that connects the east and west entrances to the park. The east side has shade and

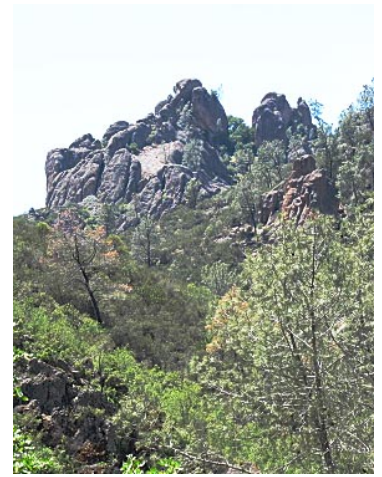
water, the west has high walls. The rock formations provide for spectacular pinnacles that attract rock climbers. The park features unusual talus caves that house at least thirteen species of bats. Pinnacles is most often visited in spring or fall because of the intense heat during the summer months.







It's pretty and green right now. In just a few short weeks it will be turning to golden brown.



The hike up Condor Gulch trail is mostly up hill. I decided to take the 10 minute tour. On the way up I was mostly watching the trail so as not to trip over any rocks. I came to (sort of) a flat stretch where I began to find a few wild flowers - not many - but a sampling of a few. At the end of the



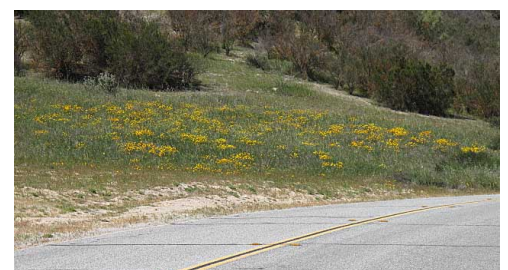
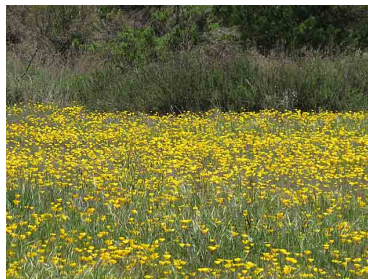
level stretch (where I decided to turn around) I found in the shade of a tree what I considered a special find. I thought it could only be the single flower in this whole canyon. I understand they are called Mariposa Lilies! What a find! For once, it was easy to photograph. Here are some other samples on my way back down.



On the way down I must have been much more observant. I found 3 or 4 more of the Mariposa Lilies beside the trail.



This has been a very dry year in California. Therefore, wild flowers are not too plentiful. However, California Poppies seem to be in full bloom around here. Patches of orange are visible along the road sides.







I came across this spectacular field and had to make a turn around just to take it all in.



This giant lupine is surrounded by a field of poppies.



Vestiges of monument structures are still visible and used to this day.

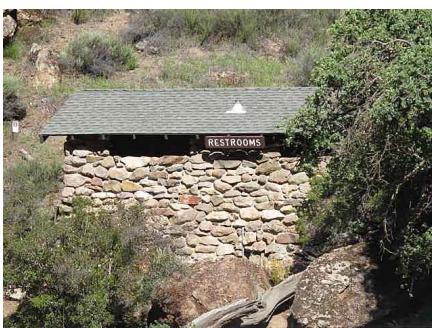
Here's your history lesson for today.

Pinnacles National Monument was established in 1908 by U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt. Pinnacles National Park was created from the former Pinnacles National Monument by legislation passed by Congress in late 2012 and signed into law by President Barack Obama on January 10, 2013.

Pinnacles is the ninth unit in the National Park System in California to be named a national park.

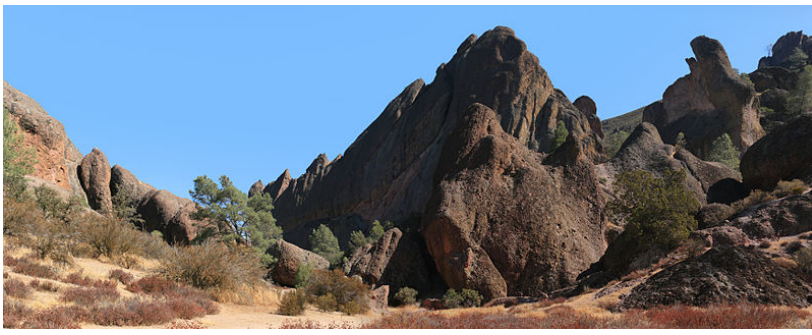
In 1933 a Civilian Conservation Corps camp was established for about 200 men who worked on additions to the trail network. CCC laborers improved the road in Bear Gulch, built tourist cabins, and constructed the dam at the Bear Gulch reservoir. A fire lookout was built by the CCC on Chalone Peak in 1935, but was destroyed by fire in 1951 and replaced by a frame structure the following year. The park's visitor center and headquarters were built in 1936-37 from local stone. A superintendent's residence was started in 1941 and completed in 1949.

The park is located near the San Andreas Fault, which had a hand in creating the unique formations the park protects. The Pinnacles are part of the Neenach Volcano which erupted 23 million years ago near present-day Lancaster, California. The movement of the Pacific Plate along the San Andreas Fault split a section of rock off from the main body of the volcano and moved it 195 miles to the northwest in what is now Pinnacles National Park.



Since I didn't hike to the high pinnacles, I borrowed a few from the internet.





Pinnacles National Park has been a part of the California Condor Recovery Program since 2003. The park now manages 27 free-flying condors. Each bird is monitored carefully after its release to increase its chances of survival. Management by park biologists helps newly released condors choose safe roosting sites and avoid hazards such as power lines, buildings, roads or trails, and lead-contaminated food.

Native Americans in the Pinnacles region comprised the Chalon and Mutsun groups of the Ohlone people, who left stone artifacts in the park. These native people declined with the arrival of the Spanish in the 18th century, who brought novel diseases and changes to the natives' way of life. The last Chalon had died or departed from the area by 1810. From 1810 to 1865, when the first Anglo-American settlers arrived, the Pinnacles region was a wilderness without human use or habitation. The establishment of a Spanish mission at Soledad hastened the area's native depopulation through disease and dispersion. Archaeological surveys have found thirteen sites inhabited by native Americans, twelve of which post-date the establishment of the missions. One site is believed to be about 2000 years old.

By the 1880s the Pinnacles, then known as the Palisades, were visited by picnickers from the surrounding communities who would explore the caves and camp.

Between 1889 and 1891, newspaper articles shifted from describing excursions to the "Palisades" to calling them the "Pinnacles."

Well, dear readers, that has been my exploration for this day. I am looking for more exciting exploration tomorrow. Until then, thanks for coming along with me on this adventure. - - Earl

