
MIDDLE MOUNTAIN INTERPRETIVE HIKES



Image Adopted from Thompson & West History of Sutter County 1879

FALL/WINTER 2020-21

A Brief Moment Captures a Special Place

By MICHAEL HUBBARTT

This morning I woke up to a pleasant surprise. Although, it was another grey, smokey, and depressing September dawn that Californians are experiencing due to the wildfires raging around the state, a special moment was about to briefly take place.

As I opened the door, I spotted in the distance, far across the yard, a small flock of grey birds. Immediately, I recognized them as a covey of California Quail.

Living in the country, I wisely keep binoculars on a hook at arm's reach.

Ahhh! Up close through the lenses, their striking colorations are mesmerizing. Clustered together for safety, they flit along ... pecking at the ground ... finding nibblies ... every few steps.

Twelve of them. Oh, there is another. And another. Soon a truck roars by on the highway, briefly distracting my attention. When I return my admiring gaze, the quails have already moved on their merry way.

Had I opened the door just a few minutes later, I would never have seen them!

It is these captured moments that the Middle Mountain



California Quail Photo by Laura Lush

Interpretive program happily bring to you! We study our Sibley, Audubon, or Peterson Field Guides so we can point out those elusive, memorable details that our most casual observers hiking in the Sutter Buttes might miss.

But, as of now, public health officials are still specifying no public gatherings. Therefore, our interpretive/ guided treks

are postponed, and our Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes' Board meetings are restricted to Zoom computer networking. Hopefully, we will see you next year, though!

Thankfully, family ranching and farming operations in the Sutter Buttes are continuing as normal which is reassuring news since California's Central Valley agricultural region feeds the nation.

In the meantime, we invite you to explore the public parks and open spaces around the Central Valley remaining open this fall season. Many of us are touring them, too!

Finally, we are really looking forward to picking up the highly anticipated Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust 2021 annual fundraising calendar and thoughtfully marking off the days until we can trek our glorious, nature-filled Sutter Buttes landscape together once again.

*To purchase the beautiful Sutter Buttes calendar for yourself and/or for gift giving, please refer to the:
Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust (SBRLT) website:*

www.sutterbutteslandtrust.org, or contact SBRLT at 530-755-3568

The Mission of Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes

“Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes advances the understanding of the natural and cultural features of the Sutter Buttes through interactive educational activities for schoolchildren and the public.”



Who We Are

Board of Directors

President: Greg Payne, Director/
Education Program

Vice Pres: Mike Hubbartt, Director

Treasurer: Theresa Dwinger

Laura Lush, Director

Spencer Morrison, Director

Kelly Swanson, Director

Joe Bouchard, Director

Secretary: Kathleen Payne, Education
Program Coordinator

Support Positions

Margit Sands, Interpretive Hikes
Director/Advisor

Kathy Larsen, Education
Program Advisor

Kelly Gash, Open Hikes Coordinator

Advisors

Walt Anderson, Naturalist

Brain Hausback, Geologist

Margit Sands, Landowner

Pete Sands, Naturalist

Ty Shaeffer, Landowner

Gene Trapp, Biologist

Stan Wright, Biologist

David Wyatt, Biologist

Inquiries may be directed by
mail, by email, or by telephone:

Mailing Address:

PO Box 3613, Yuba City, CA 95992

Email:

mmsutterbutteshikes@yahoo.com

Telephone: 530-370-4777

Website:

middlemountainhikes.org

President's Message

BY GREGORY PAYNE



Photo of North Butte by Laura Lush

The days are getting shorter and temperatures are starting to cool. As October begins, we start thinking about hiking in the Sutter Buttes. Thanks to COVID-19, things all over the world have changed. Last March when precautions were started to limit the spread of this coronavirus, our hiking season at Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes (MMIH) came to a screeching halt. Hikes were canceled and refunds were made. The hiking season for Spring 2020 was over. And now you are reading our Fall Newsletter which should have a fall-hiking schedule in it somewhere. But, alas, it does not. Unfortunately, this year, we will have to wait a while longer before we can gather together for a day of hiking.

It might seem like going on a hike in the Buttes would be easy to manage. We could all wear masks and stay a safe distance apart. After all, hiking is outdoors, and if you are like me,



Photo by Laura Lush

you have been on some hikes on your own this summer. But the dynamics of a hike with MMIH is a little more complicated.

First of all, there are the guides and back-up guides. Some are in the “older” age group; many have pre-existing conditions that place them more at risk; and some are just more cautious because of family members with a higher risk for getting COVID-19. Other problems with having a hike include carpooling. We certainly cannot ask hikers to share a ride to our trailheads. Then, there is the portable-toilet situation. They are cleaned once a week on Fridays so how do we keep things sanitized for multiple groups over two days of the weekend? Much as we hate to do it, we are not going to have any hikes this fall. Hopefully, there will be a COVID-19 vaccine soon.

Early in January, we will be publishing our Spring Newsletter. We will, once again, be evaluating how safe it is to hike in a group. It will be great if we have some kind of “new” normal where we can gather and hike and learn more about the Sutter Buttes. My wish is that we will have a Sunset Serenade in May to celebrate our return to hiking in the Sutter Buttes.



Like Us on Facebook!



Middle Mountain Education Program

BY KATHLEEN AND GREGORY PAYNE



Photo of Margit Sands and Schoolchildren by Kathleen Payne

Our 2019 - 2020 Ed Program school year was wonderful! We had about 20 schools hike with us and over 1,350 students. We finished the season on Thursday, March 12, and had to cancel the remaining two schools due to COVID-19 and the immediate closure of schools. It was very disappointing to not be able to take the children on their scheduled field trip into the Sutter Buttes.

The faces of the children change year after year, but the excitement and joy at spending a day in nature and learning fun stuff still remains the same. They love it! One group of 4th graders was seated on moss and lichen-covered rocks while eating lunch. The spring calves were plentiful and were very curious as they wandered by us as the children ate. I asked some of the students around us if they had ever eaten lunch outdoors with cows as



Photo by Laura Lush

company. Then, I expanded it to: "Have you ever eaten lunch outside in nature like this?" The answer once again was: "No!" This got the children talking with one another and before long they were watching a western fence lizard (blue belly) sunning itself on a rock while doing push-ups. The property owner, Margit Sands, showed up on her horse and visited with us. Margit loves sharing her ranch with the Education Program and introducing children to a working-cattle ranch.

Often, we see large birds flying overhead and usually they are turkey vultures, but today it was a bird of prey. As we were walking back to the bus, one flew low, perhaps 40 feet directly above us and straight down the line of children. It made a graceful arc turn, and we were able to identify it as a red-shouldered hawk. It made a few more passes overhead to check us out. The adults and children in the back of our group did not notice it since they were busy watching three coyotes trot along the fence line and disappear into the brush. This is how we finished up another wonderful day in the Sutter Buttes!

From all of the Ed-program Guides and BuGs, we love being able to spend our free time each week introducing children to nature. Hopefully, they will become the future stewards of the land and be "nature geeks" just like us!

MIDDLE MOUNTAIN INTERPRETIVE HIKES

PO Box 3613
Yuba City, CA 95992-3613

IN THIS ISSUE

- A Brief Moment Captures a Special Place
- President's Message
- Middle Mountain Education Program

**MMIH Gift Certificates
make a perfect Christmas
or birthday present
for hikers and nature
enthusiasts!**

TO SIGN UP FOR MIDDLE MOUNTAIN INTERPRETIVE HIKES
E-NEWSLETTERS, PLEASE CONTACT THE
OPEN-HIKES COORDINATOR AT
MMSUTTERBUTTESHIKES@YAHOO.COM OR 530-370-4777

SUTTER COUNTY MUSEUM UPCOMING EVENTS



The Sutter County Museum is temporarily closed due to COVID-19.

Please sign-up for the museum's monthly eNewsletter to receive updates about upcoming programs and events!

FYI: When the museum re-opens, the Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust 2021 "Sutter Buttes Calendar" will be available for purchasing.

Contact Us

Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes is a group of dedicated individuals who work on a part-time basis, most of us volunteering our time. You can reach us:

- On our website: www.middlemountainhikes.org
- By mail: PO Box 3613, Yuba City, CA 95992-3613
- Kelly Gash, Open Hikes Coordinator, mmsutterbutteshikes@yahoo.com or 530-370-4777
- Margit Sands, Charter Hikes Coordinator, sandsmp@comcast.net or 530-846-5142
- Gregory & Kathleen Payne, Education Program Coordinators, gregkathy72@gmail.com or 530-218-1346

Please leave detailed messages or requests for information. We appreciate your patience and understanding and, especially, your interest in the Sutter Buttes.

Newsletter

Editor: Kelly Gash

Printer: Printworx

Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization; Federal Tax ID #32-0454378.