
MIDDLE MOUNTAIN INTERPRETIVE HIKES



Image Adopted from Thompson & West History of Sutter County 1879

2023-24 FALL/WINTER

President's Message More Than an Extinct Volcano

BY GREG PAYNE

Our Fall Hiking Season is almost upon us. We will soon begin hiking in the Sutter Buttes. Hopefully there is a hike for everyone to enjoy: from strenuous hikes to the top of North Butte to gentle strolls under the oaks looking and listening for birds. If this year is like the last two, the popular hikes will fill up fast. However, if the hike you were hoping for is full, don't let that stop you from visiting the Buttes. Find another hike that suits your hiking ability and sign up.

I say this because there is more to hiking in the Sutter Buttes than just the "theme" of the hike. In fact, there are lots of interesting things that go unnoticed by most hikers unless their guide points them out.

If you are hiking in the fall, it is very likely the rains of winter haven't started yet, and the ground will be dry and dusty. This can be perfect for finding the tracks of the permanent residents of the Buttes. There are hoofprints of deer, raccoon tracks that look like miniature handprints, and bird tracks (small ones from quail and large from turkeys).

Examine the rocks as you hike with your guide. Almost every one of them has something growing on it. If it has been dry, the mosses on the rocks won't be very interesting, but after a rain they come to life. If you are fortunate to be on a hike after a recent rain, besides the color of the moss, examine their structure: some look like a manicured



Photo by Greg Payne

carpet, some like miniature ferns, and some like small forests.

The mosses are not the only organisms living on rocks. Check out all the different shapes of lichen. Lichen is an organism formed by the symbiotic combination of a fungus and one or two algae. By themselves algae or fungi would not survive very well in the dry conditions of a summer in the Buttes. But together as a lichen, they can. The fungus provides the structure, and the algae provides the food with its use of photosynthesis. Found on the rocks and trees of the Sutter Buttes, there are about 100 different kinds of lichen. Some look like flattened pebbles stuck together, some are leaflike, and some look like free-standing branches. They also come in all sorts of colors: brown, orange, yellow, tan, gray, and different shades of green.

If you look up in the trees, on the branches and on the leaves, you might discover the different shapes of galls. Most people have seen the "apple-like" growth on an oak tree. Oak trees do not grow apples. That is a gall growing on the tree. It is part of the tree. Most galls found in the Buttes are started by a small cynipid wasp, about the size of a mosquito, which lays its eggs on a new branch or leaf. This egg secretes a liquid that causes the oak tree to grow the gall around the new egg to protect it from predators like birds or other insects. The gall on a branch is that apple looking thing, which will start out looking green or cream colored and eventually be dark brown or black. On a leaf there are all kinds of shapes of galls. Some look like sea urchins. Some are shaped like miniature Hershey Kisses. They can be round, oblong, upright, some look like a crown on a turban. Even when the leaves have fallen from the trees, you can find galls still attached. There are many different shapes of galls to discover. They protect the wasp egg as it goes through its stages of larva, pupa, and finally matures to an adult wasp.

Please join us on a hike this year. Maybe you will discover something new or something you have never noticed before. The Sutter Buttes are more than an extinct volcano.

To sign-up for Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes E-Newsletters, please visit the MMIH website at: <https://www.middlemountainhikes.org>.

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.

Donations are welcome at MMIH, a 501c(3) non-profit organization. To donate send check to PO Box 3613, Yuba City, CA 95992-3613

Who We Are

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

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Email:

mmsutterbutteshikes@yahoo.com
Telephone: 530-370-4777

Website:

<https://www.middlemountainhikes.org>

MMIH General Information

Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes is not requiring hikers to be vaccinated. Please note, masks are welcome! If you have cold, flu, or Covid-19 symptoms, do not come on your registered hike.

None of our hikers or guides want to be exposed to cold/flu/Covid symptoms. If you are ill, MMIH will either refund your money or reschedule your hike. Thank you in advance for your kind and respectful consideration of others.

Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes provides access to privately owned ranch land of the Sutter Buttes. Our guides share their knowledge of the hiking terrain's origins and history. And as a group we will examine together the Butte's natural ecosystems and habitats – the different territories of the Buttes provide a wide variety of hiking experiences.

MMIH offers a definitive guideline/chart of "One Boot to Six Boot" hike ratings pertaining to physical fitness (ability/agility levels) to help all hikers succeed with their individually selected hike(s). This hike guideline/chart was specifically established by MMIH to assist hikers with choosing compatible hikes. (Our "Hike Boot Ratings" chart is included in this newsletter and is also on the MMIH website).

All of our outings are educational/interpretive hikes. Note, the same hikes/outings are not usually offered every season. For your information, a typical day for hiking begins at 8:00 a.m. (our usual time for meet and greet sessions) and ends about 3:00 p.m. (unless otherwise stated). Scheduled hikes proceed in all but the most severe of weather conditions.

Participants of all hikes should be prepared for uneven footing, stepping over rocks and boulders, crossing streams, and hill climbing. Fall hikers are likely to encounter and contend with thistles and stickers. Spring hikers are likely to encounter wet, squishy, and ankle-deep grass. Poison oak is abundant, but you will be warned of proximity. Mosquitos are often present unless there has been a recent freeze.

No smoking and/or vaping is allowed on the Sutter Buttes privately owned properties. We do not hike on the Sutter Buttes working ranches in the summer because of the serious threats of fire danger and rattlesnakes. Rattlesnakes,

though common in the warmer weather, are usually reclusive and inactive during our hiking seasons of fall/winter (combined) and spring. Some hikes are acceptable for children, but most are not. No hikes are appropriate for babies or toddlers. Hikes rated 3 or 4 Boot may be suitable for children 12 or older, but it depends on the child and the hike. Please inform the Hike Coordinator if you are considering making a hike reservation which includes children.

Open Hikes are limited to approximately 20 unless otherwise stated. The hikes range from \$35 to \$45 per person. To sign up/register for open hikes, email: mmsutterbutteshikes@yahoo.com; or phone/text: 530-370-4777 during the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Charter Hikes cost \$300 for up to 10 hikers and \$30 for each additional hiker, with a maximum of 20. To arrange a charter (private/custom) hike, email lushinthebuttes@gmail.com or phone/text: 530-301-7371 during the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

The fall-hiking season is usually posted in early October (with hikes to begin in late October or early November), and the spring-hiking season is usually posted in early February (with hikes to begin in late February or early March). All hike information is available on the MMIH website at: <https://www.middlemountainhikes.org>. For the seasonal hike schedule, updates/announcements, please subscribe to Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes e-Newsletters at: <https://www.middlemountainhikes.org>. Follow Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/sutterbutteshikes/>



Like Us on Facebook!



Education Program Notes

By Kathleen & Greg Payne / Ed-Program Coordinators

The Middle Mountain Education Program has been operating since 2008 with its creation by Katherine Larsen and other retired elementary school educators. During the following years it has grown and developed into the current program that continues to educate 3rd & 4th graders. The students come from schools that are within an hour or less traveling time from the Sutter Buttes.

We currently have about 20 retired teachers and volunteers donating their time to walk with these children on a regular basis during the school year. We can accommodate 3 classes of students on 3 different trails. All of the volunteers come back week after week to hike with the students because they love it! We enjoy spending time with children and introducing them to the beauty of nature. Along the trail we have scheduled places where we know that we will stop to talk about acorn woodpeckers when we see the active granary tree the woodpeckers inhabit. The children “discover” a deer antler on the trail, and at that time the student with the name tag “Deer” comes forward to have the antler placed on his head and discuss, “Is this an antler or a horn?” There is a big difference, so we want to make sure they understand that an antler is shed in winter and is made of bone.

With third graders we will talk about how the native people, the Maidu or Nisenan would hunt deer and utilize the deer for many purposes: food, clothing, and tools. Pounding acorns is always a fun experience for the third graders, and they learn the way that the tannins were processed so that the powder of the acorn could be cooked and eaten in many forms of food.

Fourth graders have the opportunity to learn more about the relationship between algae and fungus that creates lichen. In the Sutter Buttes we have had over 100 different types of lichen identified by Lichenologists. The students will use magnifying lenses to examine the lichens and fungus closely and discover the variety of lichens on the volcanic rocks in the Buttes.

All of the children, their teacher, and adult chaperones are taught about the volcanic history of the Sutter Buttes and their spiritual significance to the native peoples that walked this land for thousands of years.

Many of the children that hike with us on this field trip have never sat on the ground to eat lunch. At school they often eat in the cafeteria at assigned seats. Here they can sit on the top of Seismograph Hill or under the shade of the oldest blue oak tree in the Buttes. Sitting on the ground eating a sack lunch is a unique experience for many of them.

A hike with the children would not be complete without a “skull talk.” We bring along in our day packs authentic skulls of animals that would have lived in the Buttes for centuries: deer, coyote, raccoon, ringtail and of course, skunk. Each animal has different jaws and tooth structures that allow them to consume their necessary foods. The students love the skull talk – right before heading to the bus and driving out of the Buttes – back to school. They are tired but excited about having spent a day in nature.

We like to think that with this education program we are teaching the next generation of “naturalists” and “stewards of our land”!



Photo by Kathleen Payne

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENT NEWS!

November 10-12, 2023

caswanfestival.org

Free Admission

California SWAN FESTIVAL

<https://www.caswanfestival.org>

Hosted by the Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust

<http://www.sutterbutteslandtrust.org>

November 10 - 12, 2023

**“CELEBRATE THE WILDLIFE AND HABITATS OF OUR
ABUNDANT NORTHERN SACRAMENTO VALLEY
AT THE CALIFORNIA SWAN FESTIVAL!”**

Swan Festival Hub Locations

Swan Festival Hub

Yuba County Government Center

*(Free Admission)

915 8th Street • Marysville, CA 95901

Swan Festival Hub

Sutter County Museum

*(Free Admission)

1333 Butte House Road • Yuba City, CA 95993

*Admission to the hub locations is free. Guided tours require a per person fee at registration.

SPONSORS: California Department of Fish & Wildlife • California Rice Commission • Central Valley Joint Venture • Enterprise Rancheria
Frank M. Booth • Magnolia Ranch Owners • Sutter County Museum • Yuba County • Yuba Water Agency • Sutter County Children & Families Commission

INTERESTING FACTS: As part of the Pacific Flyway, the Central Valley alone supports nearly 8 million wintering waterfowl! Just before winter sets in, more than 100,000 tundra swans migrate from their remote breeding grounds in the Arctic, along the Pacific Flyway, to spend winter in California. Our rural region contains vitally important habitat that supports a variety of birds and other wildlife that are under constant threat from habitat loss. The good news is that the Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust, along with many public and private partners, are actively working to protect, restore and enhance habitat areas that support wildlife. The festival serves to advance awareness and conservation of wintering waterfowl and other diverse wildlife that migrate through (and live in) the Pacific Flyway in the Yuba, Sutter, and Colusa region. Our region's role in sustaining wildlife is additionally showcased. The festival will bring people together on the land and connect attendees and conservation partners, creating a larger, more impactful, and meaningful event. — **Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust**

Maps name the captivating 1.6 million-years old volcanic peaks as the “Sutter Buttes.”

Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes offers homage to the indigenous name of the spiritually vital “Mountains in the Middle” rising dramatically from the center of the Sacramento Valley.

Views from afar inspire closer visits through a 60-minute drive, 45-mile bike ride, or a memorable hike within the Buttes 10-mile-wide range.

Fall-Winter 2023-2024 Open-Hikes Schedule & Hike Descriptions

MAKE YOUR RESERVATION AT [HTTPS://WWW.MIDDLEMOUNTAINHIKES.ORG](https://www.middlemountainhikes.org)

Detailed hike and payment information emailed upon reservation. Unless otherwise specified in the following hike descriptions, the cost is \$35/per person; meet and greet time is by 8:00 a.m. with an ending time of 3:00 p.m.; and each hike is limited to approximately 20 registrants. All hikers are to carry a backpack containing a sack lunch/snacks and water (for a day's hike). Wear hiking boots or strong/tough/sturdy shoes with a good tread (no tennis shoes/sneakers, please)! Note: Hiking/walking sticks are a great idea for everyone!

Full Moon | Dean Place

Under the bewitching spell of the moonrise's lunar glow, we will contemplate, observe, ponder, and reflect upon the mysteries of the Sutter Buttes while walking amongst illuminated, shadowy oak groves and alluring hillsides. **Hike Difficulty Level: 2 Boot. Date: Saturday, October 28. Time: 3:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.**

Nature in the Buttes | Dean Place

Learn about the exciting diversity of plants and animals found in the Sutter Buttes and examine the fascinating adaptations that allow them to survive in an oak woodland. Topics will range from the small cynipid wasp to how the Buttes were formed. **Hike Difficulty Level: 3 Boot. Date: Saturday, November 4.**

Shaeffer East Ridge | Shaeffer Ranch

Hikers will explore the historical Shaeffer Ranch belonging to the same family since the 1860s. This moderately challenging hike provides glorious inland views of North Butte and Peace Valley. Mount Lassen and Shasta are often seen in the distant horizon, weather permitting. **Hike Difficulty Level: 3 Boot. Date: Saturday, November 18, and Saturday, January 13.**

Geology | Dean Place

Learn about the exciting volcanic origins of the Sutter Buttes, a small-mountain range, with Volcanologist, Dr. Brian Hausback, as we learn about the Buttes 1.6 million years of geological history. **Hike Difficulty Level: 4 Boot. Date: Sunday, November 19.**

Sacred Manner | Dean Place

A contemplative and peaceful walk with Stan Padilla gives us a respectful reverence for the sanctity of all life and the Native-American mythology of the Sutter Buttes. Did you know that the name Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes offers homage to the spiritually vital indigenous name, Mountains in the Middle? **Hike Difficulty Level: 2 Boot. Date: Saturday, November 25.**

Dean Ridge | Dean Place

Hike and climb the rocky, rather steep, hilly ridges of Dean Place, a working-cattle ranch, belonging to the same family since the 1890s. This invigorating hike will reward you with unforgettable views of the Sutter Buttes interior upon greeting a beautiful landscape of woodlands – a dense growth of native trees. **Hike Difficulty Level: 3-4 Boot. Date: Sunday, November 26, and Saturday, February 10.**

Tres Picos | Dean Place/North Buttes

Our Tres Picos adventure is for serious hikers able and willing to hike, climb, and summit the rugged, challenging, and daunting three peaks: North Butte, Old Man, and Pigeon Peak. Hikers must be in excellent physical condition. Limited to approximately 15 hikers. Cost: \$45. **Hike Difficulty Level: 6 Boot. Date: Saturday, December 2. Time: 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

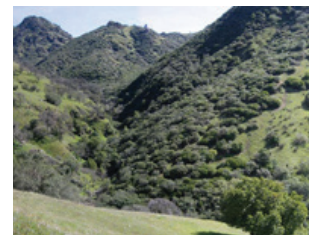
Birds in the Buttes | Dean Place

Witness a variety of birds while searching for and contemplating their natural habitat of brush, shrubbery, and old oak trees. Did you know that the Sutter Buttes are located in the famous Pacific Flyway? Remember to bring your camera and binoculars. **Hike Difficulty Level: 3 Boot. Date: Sunday, December 10. Time: 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

Brockman Challenge |

Brockman Ranch

Prepare for a six-mile strenuous and steep ascent between the tallest of ridge tops. The trail is narrow and will have us traversing a precipitous incline with an elevation gain of 1,000 feet. At the hike's midway point, we will be gazing with incredulous wonder at the deep, beautiful hidden valleys below. **Hike Difficulty Level: 5 Boot. Date: Sunday, December 10.**



Summit | Dean Place/North Butte

The Summit Ascent is one of our most challenging treks. This route is a steep 1,000-foot push straight up North Butte. It is off trail and has no easy switchbacks. Hikers must be in extremely good physical condition and not suffer from vertigo. Limited to approximately 15 hikers. Cost: \$45. **Hike Difficulty Level: 5 Boot. Dates: Saturday, December 16; Sunday, January 7; Sunday, January 21; and Saturday, February 3.**

Shaeffer West Ridge | Shaeffer Ranch

This moderate/challenging hike will have you exploring the Shaeffer Family Ranch, a historical Sutter Buttes property

belonging to the same family since the 1860s. Depending on visibility, the hike may include views of North Butte, Peace Valley, and the old Titan Missile Site. Both Mount Lassen and Shasta are often seen in the distance. **Hike Difficulty Level: 3 Boot. Sunday, December 17, and Sunday, February 4.**

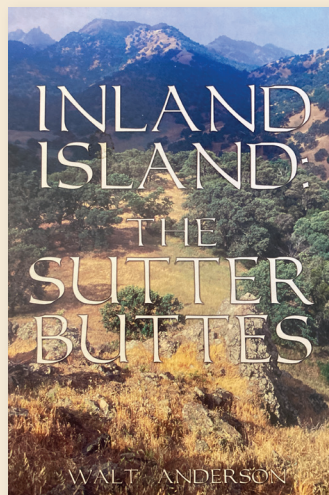
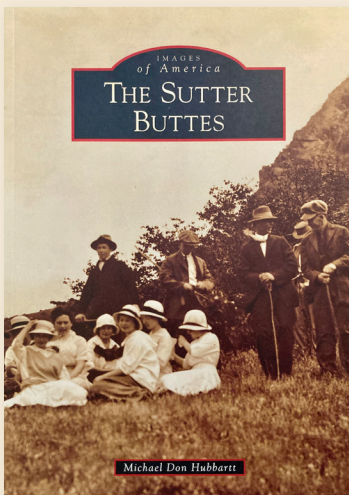
Brockman Canyon | Brockman Ranch

Travel to the intriguing and fascinating central core of the Sutter Buttes. Be prepared for a steady climb on uneven ground with frequent stops for contemplation of the landscape's natural elements and mesmerizing views. **Hike Difficulty Level: 3 - 4 Boot. Dates: Saturday, January 20, and Sunday, February 11.**

REMEMBER TO PURCHASE YOUR SUTTER BUTTES REGIONAL LAND TRUST 2024 CALENDAR THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!



It is the perfect gift for everyone on your list — including yourself. The calendar is an annual fundraiser of the Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust, and your purchase directly supports the SBRLT mission to protect and maintain the natural and agricultural resources of the Sutter Buttes and the surrounding region for present and future generations. Other great gift ideas are Walt Anderson's *Inland Island: The Sutter Buttes* and Michael Hubbart's *Images of America — The Sutter Buttes*. Buy your calendar and/or books at the Sutter County Museum located at 1333 Butte House Road in Yuba City or at <https://www.sutterbutteslandtrust.org>



HIKE/EVENT BOOT RATINGS

Hike/Event Boot Ratings are a guideline for helping you to choose an outing that matches your physical fitness/ability levels. Distance and elevation gain are dependent on the outing, the property, and the guide.

1 Boot = Easy: One to three miles and less than 300 feet elevation gain/loss.

2 Boot = Moderate: Two to five miles and generally less than 600 feet elevation gain/loss.

3 Boot = Moderately Challenging: Four to seven miles with the possibility of multiple elevation gains/losses of 600-800 feet.

4 Boot = Difficult: Four to seven miles and elevation gains/losses likely in excess of 800 feet.

5 Boot = Strenuous: Four to eight miles with multiple and/or significant elevation gains/losses in excess of 1,000+ feet.

6 Boot = Extreme: Five to fourteen miles with multiple and significant elevation gains/losses in excess of 1,000+ feet (miles determined by outing and weather).

2023-24 FALL/WINTER SEASON HIKE SCHEDULE

DATE	DAY	HIKE NAME	WHERE	BOOT
10/28/2023	SATURDAY	FULL MOON	DEAN	2
11/4/2023	SATURDAY	NATURE IN THE BUTTES	DEAN	3
11/18/2023	SATURDAY	SHAEFFER - EAST RIDGE	SHAEFFER	3
11/19/2023	SUNDAY	GEOLOGY	DEAN	4
11/25/2023	SATURDAY	SACRED MANNER	DEAN	2
11/26/2023	SUNDAY	DEAN RIDGE	DEAN	3-4
12/2/2023	SATURDAY	TRES PICOS*	DEAN & NORTH BUTTE	6
12/10/2023	SUNDAY	BIRDS IN THE BUTTES	DEAN	3
12/10/2023	SUNDAY	BROCKMAN CHALLENGE	BROCKMAN	5
12/16/2023	SATURDAY	SUMMIT*	DEAN & NORTH BUTTE	5
12/17/2023	SUNDAY	SHAEFFER - WEST RIDGE	SHAEFFER	3
1/7/2024	SUNDAY	SUMMIT*	DEAN & NORTH BUTTE	5
1/13/2024	SATURDAY	SHAEFFER - EAST RIDGE	SHAEFFER	3
1/20/2024	SATURDAY	BROCKMAN CANYON	BROCKMAN	3 to 4
1/21/2024	SUNDAY	SUMMIT*	DEAN & NORTH BUTTE	5
2/3/2024	SATURDAY	SUMMIT*	DEAN & NORTH BUTTE	5
2/4/2024	SUNDAY	SHAEFFER - WEST RIDGE	SHAEFFER	3
2/10/2024	SATURDAY	DEAN RIDGE	DEAN	3-4
2/11/2024	SUNDAY	BROCKMAN CANYON	BROCKMAN	3 to 4

*\$45 Hike. All other open hikes listed are \$35.

Notes: The approximate number of hikers (per hike) is 20. Summit & Tres Picos Hikes (15).

MIDDLE MOUNTAIN INTERPRETIVE HIKES

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Yuba City, CA 95992-3613

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**MMIH Gift Certificates
are a great gift idea
for hikers and nature
enthusiasts!**

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PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:
[WWW.HTTPS://WWW.MIDDLEMOUNTAINHIKES.ORG](https://www.middlemountainhikes.org)

SUTTER COUNTY MUSEUM



Admission to the Sutter County Museum is free.
Donations are welcome! Register for the Museum's monthly
E-Newsletter at www.suttercountymuseum.org to receive
updates about upcoming programs and events.

Like & Follow the Sutter County Museum on Facebook & Instagram!

Contact Us

*Thank you for reaching out to
Middle Mountain Interpretive Hikes! You may contact us:*

- On our website: <https://www.middlemountainhikes.org>.
- By mail: PO Box 3613, Yuba City, CA 95992-3613
- Kelly Gash, Open Hikes Coordinator,
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