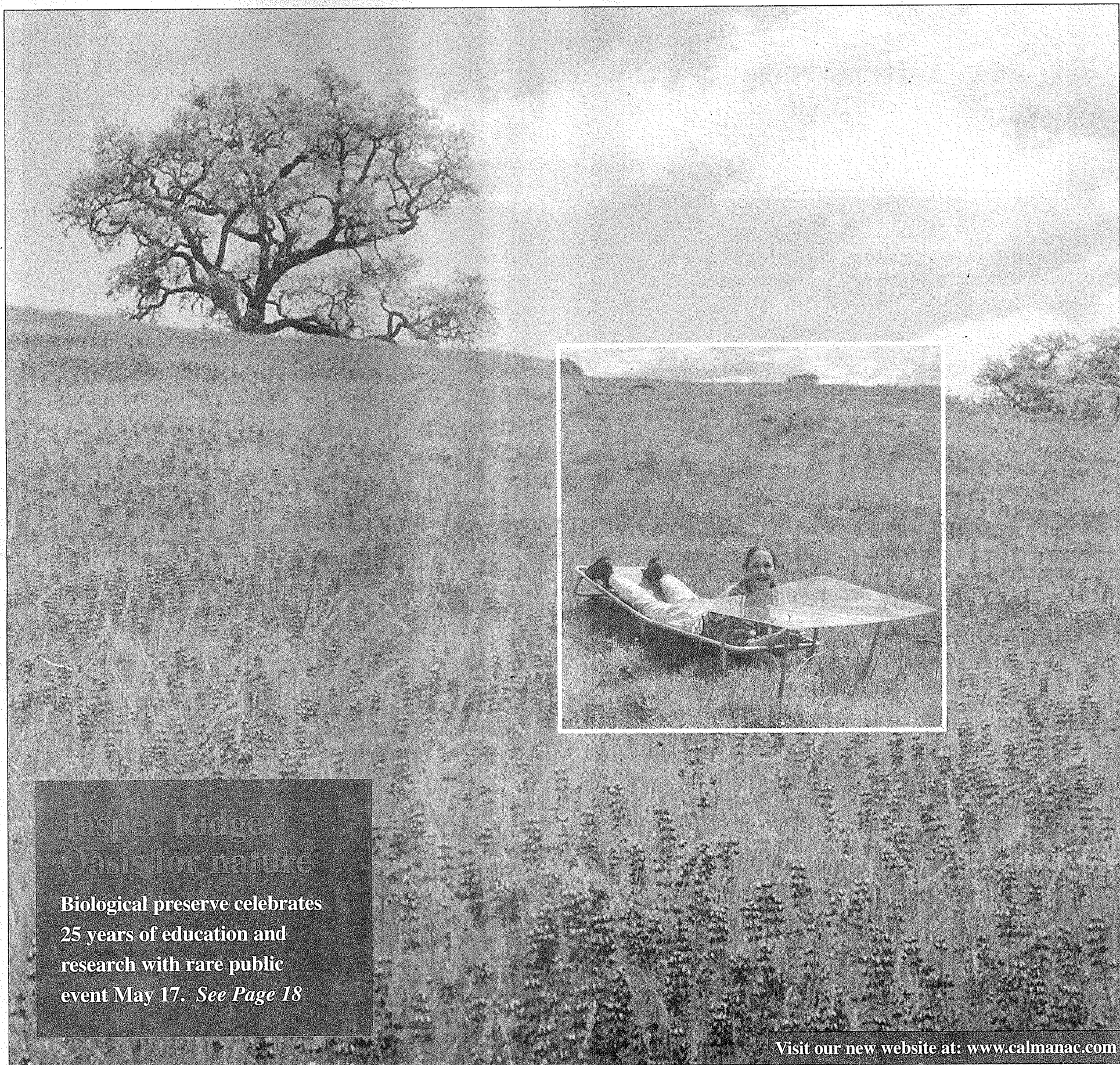


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Jasper Ridge: Oasis for nature

Biological preserve celebrates
25 years of education and
research with rare public
event May 17. *See Page 18*

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News This Week

MENLO PARK

Council meets tonight
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ABORTION SIGNS

Federal court overturns
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Oasis for nature and research

Continued from page 19)

Goldfields are one of the signature plants that grow primarily on serpentine soils, unusual geologic formations from deep inside the earth that occur sporadically on the eastern side of the San Andreas Fault. The other major remaining serpentine grasslands on the Peninsula where the public can easily view the spectacular spring bloom of unique plants is a few miles to the north at Edgewood County Park.

Serpentine soils are so chemically unfriendly that only native plants can survive. They have had eons to adapt to the poor nutrients, high magnesium, low calcium, and poor drainage of their home. The lush imported grasses that came from Europe as seeds in hay for cows can't compete and crowd out the less aggressive native plants and grasses.

The results become vividly apparent on Jasper Ridge every spring when the native flowers bloom en masse to reproduce before the summer heat and drought set in. An invisible line seems to separate areas of brilliant color from fields of lush green grass. "You can see the boundary where the serpentine grass-

land begins and the sandstone ends," says Dr. Cohen during a spring stroll over the ridge.

While the serpentine grasslands are spectacular and important to research, Jasper Ridge also provides a wide variety of other habitats that are valuable for study. Meadows, lakes, swamps, chaparral, stands of oak and redwood, and streams are home to many species of plants and animals that can teach us about our environment.

This variety, and its proximity to Stanford, make Jasper Ridge ideal for a biological experiment area. Costs are lower, travel is shorter and logistics are easier. "It's so accessible," says Dr. Cohen.

Research

Research at Jasper Ridge goes way back to the early days of Stanford University. The first master's degree based on research at the ridge was granted in 1896; the thesis subject was the genus manzanita.

After more than a century, research is thriving, with 42 research papers published last year. Even though the checkerspot butterfly is close to gone from the ridge, scientists are considering an experiment to re-introduce the species.

The most exciting new research program at Jasper Ridge will examine multiple factors that may be involved in global climate change. Dr. Harold Mooney and his colleagues will spend three years studying how warmer temperatures, increased carbon dioxide, increased nitrogen in the soil (deposited by air pollution), and changes in precipitation, will affect growth of grassland plants.

The million-dollar project is being funded by the National Science Foundation program on Terrestrial Ecology and Global Change. It builds on a five-year, multi-institution study of the effects of increasing carbon dioxide — a key component in global warming — on local grassland ecology.

"This is the only project of its kind anywhere in the world that looks at multiple factors interacting rather than a single factor," says Dr. Cohen. "It's trying to link global change to these small communities."

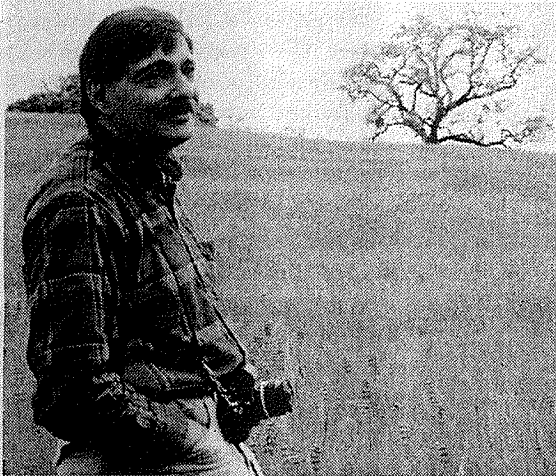


Photo by Marjorie Mader

Philippe Cohen, administrative director of Jasper Ridge Biologic Preserve, lives in Menlo Park with his wife, Cindy Stead, and their son, Benjamin.

Open house on May 17 at Jasper Ridge Preserve

WHAT: For the first time within memory, Stanford's Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve will be open to the public Sunday, May 17, for Discovery Day.

The public is invited to visit the preserve and learn about its history and the scientific work that is conducted there. Visitors can walk on trails in part of the preserve and visit more than 20 stations staffed by researchers and docents.

WHEN: Sunday, May 17. Visitors may enter between 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. and must leave by 4 p.m.

WHERE: Visitors coming by car should park at Addison Wesley, 2725 Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park and ride free shuttle buses to the preserve, which is on Stanford lands south of the Stanford Linear Accelerator off of Sand Hill Road.

BICYCLISTS may enter through the main gate at 4001 Sand Hill Road.

COST: Admission is free, and no reservations are required.

WHAT TO BRING: Visitors should bring water, appropriate sun protection, and a picnic lunch. Light refreshments only will be available. No pets or smoking allowed.

MORE INFORMATION about Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve can be obtained on its web site: <http://jasper1.stanford.edu/>.

New mudflats on Searsville Lake were deposited by February's El Nino storms. At the present rate of filling, Searsville lake could be Searsville Meadow in 15 years.

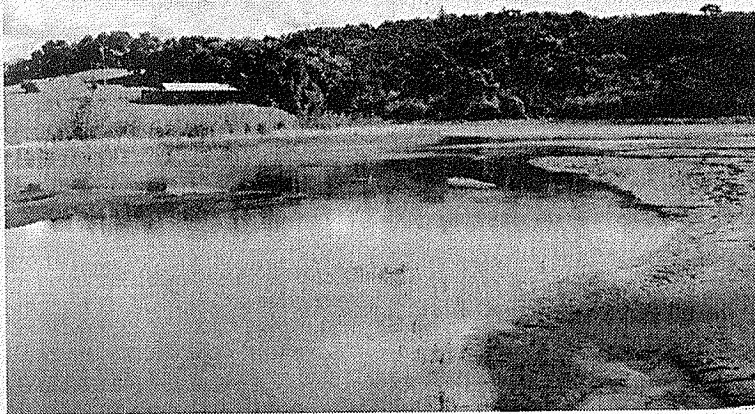


Photo by Marjorie Mader

Searsville Lake could be a meadow in 15 years

BY MARION SOFTKY

In the wooded delta above Searsville Lake, the trail crosses a unique bridge: it sits on four truck wheels.

The reason: During last winter's El Nino downpours, the silt-laden torrents surging into Searsville Lake washed out bridges, deposited inches-to-feet of silt in the upstream delta, and re-routed stream channels. "Rather than tell the water where to go, we put wheels on the bridge," explains Philippe Cohen, administrative director of Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve.

A stroll through the delta with Dr. Cohen shows vividly the awesome capacity of nature to change the landscape during a single flooding event. At their peak, the February storms carried down 20,000 tons of earth each day that had been gouged out of the Portola Valley hills. Streams laid down 10 to 12 inches of new silt over the entire delta area, and up to 4 feet in some places. "The amount of silt is absolutely awesome," says Dr. Cohen. "Corte Madera Creek has the highest sediment load for any creek in the Santa Cruz Mountains."

As a result, Searsville Lake is filling up faster than anyone had predicted. Just in the last year, it has lost 20 percent of its surface area and 10 to 15 percent of its volume, Dr. Cohen says. Since Searsville dam was completed in 1891, the lake has lost 70 percent of its original volume. Standing on a bridge near the head of the lake, he points at shimmering mud banks where there used to be open water. "We'll be walking across this by the end of summer," he says.

As the lake fills, the delta expands and trees grow.

Dr. Cohen points to a forest of mid-sized trees near the wheeled bridge. "In 1970 this was open lake," he says. "We're talking about enormous change in a short period of time. People think of landscape changes as subtle. There is nothing subtle here."

While Stanford is still pondering what to do about Searsville Lake in the long term — whether to dredge it, tear down the dam, raise the dam for flood control, or leave it alone — Dr. Cohen notes it would be extremely expensive and disruptive to do anything but let nature take its course. He estimates it will take another 15 years for Searsville lake to become Searsville Meadow. "It's unlikely we can preserve the lake," he says, adding hopefully, "I want to learn from it."

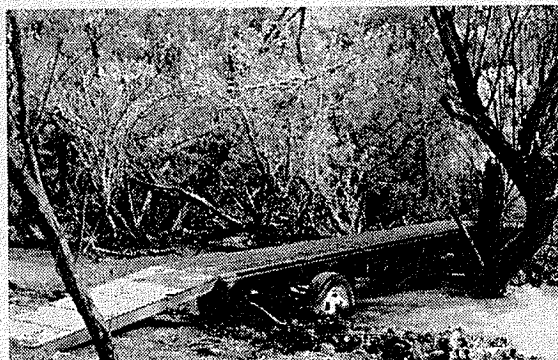


Photo by Marjorie Mader

Corte Madera Creek moved so much during the floods that Stanford put wheels on its bridge.

What to see

The following stations will be located on the west side of the lake and below Searsville Dam:

- Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve: A Field Station
- Searsville Lake Watershed
- How Plants Build Themselves
- Searsville Town History
- Global Change: Elevated CO₂
- Argentine Ant Invasion
- Grassland Responses to Multi-Factor Global Changes
- Yellow Star Thistle Invasion
- Computerized Mapping
- Chaparral Plants
- Earthquake Monitoring
- Plants of Jasper Ridge
- Predation in Searsville Lake
- Electromagnetic Earthquake Precursors
- Fire History
- Lichens
- Environmental Volunteers
- Checkerspot Butterflies
- History of Searsville Dam
- Tracks and Scat
- Archeology
- Fish of the Preserve
- The Importance of Grassland Biodiversity
- Slide Shows

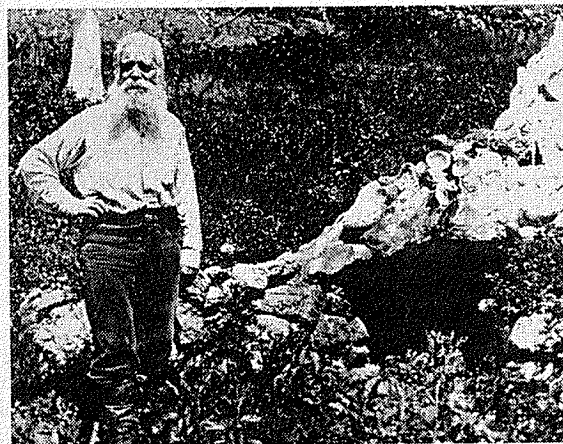


Photo courtesy, Portola Valley archives.

Domenico Grosso, known as the hermit of Jasper Ridge, spent years digging around Jasper Ridge in a vain search for silver. His cabin was a favorite destination for hundreds of Stanford students who used to call him "Domingo" or "Carramba."