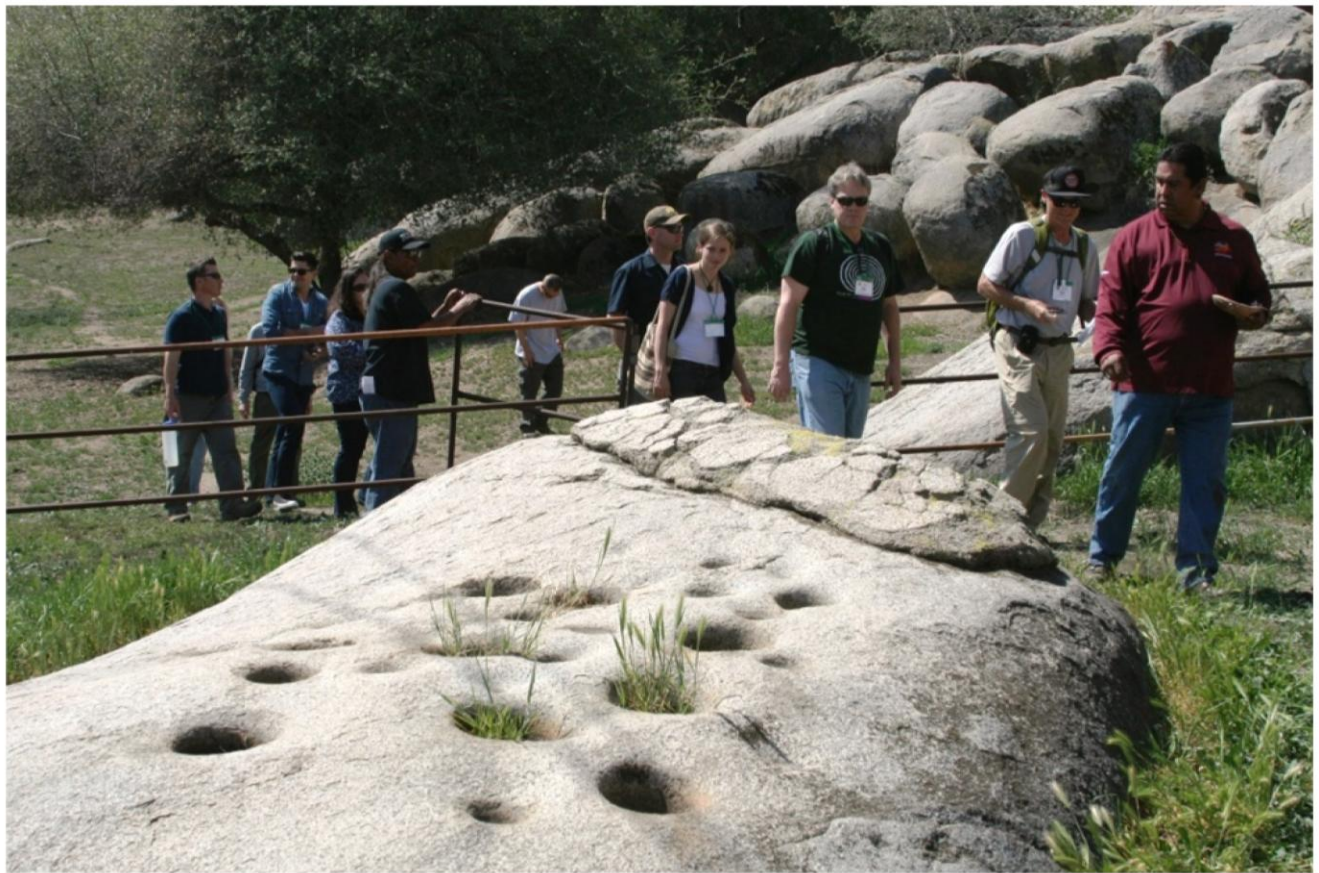


Santa Cruz Archaeological Society Newsletter

A Visit to Rocky Hill Archaeological Preserve Exeter, California – March 22-23, 2014

By Mary A. Gerbic, SCAS Member
April 16, 2014



While at the 2014 ***Society for California Archaeology*** Annual Meeting in Visalia, California, I had the opportunity to participate in a field trip to Rocky Hill Archaeological Preserve, an Archaeological Conservancy property near Exeter, California, and a traditional spiritual site of the Foothill Yokuts. The property is a 22-acre preserve of vivid pictographs on granitic boulders and in caves on the south side of Rocky Hill.

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Rocky Hill is not far from Visalia, California, and just “over the hill” from Exeter. To get to the Preserve, we drove about 12 miles east on two-lane Highway 198 from the Visalia Convention Center toward the snow-capped Sierra Nevada visible in the haze, past groves of sweet-scented orange trees, and then turned right on Yokohl Road and waited at the Jordan Toll Trail marker as other personal vehicles arrived to travel together. Then we drove for about 2 miles on Yokohl Road, past mima mounds and Yokohl Creek, and made a sharp right on E. Myer Drive. We turned into the parking lot of the Preserve where the road was lined with palm trees.

There was so much interest in the planned Sunday afternoon field trip that a second field trip was added for Saturday afternoon. About 80 people participated in one of the two trips. On hand to greet us both afternoons at Rocky Hill were Cory Wilkins, Western Regional Director for **The Archaeological Conservancy**, Deanna Commons, Archaeological Conservancy Archaeologist for this region, Manuel Andrade, the long-time steward for the Rocky Hill site, CASSP site stewards Bill and Laura Manser, and numerous local Yokuts people who assisted Manuel as guides for the large groups who turned out for the trips.



Manuel Andrade, also a member of the **Southern Sierra Archaeological Society**, and the Archaeological Conservancy folks had set up tables of handouts, *American Archaeology* magazines, brochures and liability wavers. We were told that the tour would take us up hill, over boulders, into caves with low ceilings. The tour would take us to about 60 percent of the pictographs and last at least two hours.

The Foothill Yokuts spoke next. A blessing given by Eddie, an 86-year-old elder asked for our safety on site. Our Foothill Yokuts hosts also gave us their interpretation of the site and what they asked us to think about during our visit.



For the Yokuts of this area, the Rocky Hill Archaeological Preserve is not an archaeological site, or a prehistoric site. It is a living historical and sacred site that is still in use. This was the site of a village and gathering place. They asked us to please be mindful of that, and show respect for the site and for each other. Taking photographs was OK.

With that, we broke into groups of eight people with a guide at the front and back of each group. On Saturday, our group headed initially by Manuel, first walked to the Welcoming Panel.

Here we paid our respects before pictographs of a medicine man, a bear figure with outstretched hand, a turtle, and several other figures painted mostly in red and white.

The pictographs were somewhat faded, as they were out in the open air, but that did not diminish the impact of our first view of the panels. One of our guides sung another song here, and asked us to help them preserve places like this and live in harmony.

As we walked back to go up to the next site, we passed a red guardian figurine and low granitic boulders with numerous bedrock mortars. We also could just make out a large red arc, which was probably a rainbow, and a centipede representing time.



On most people's minds, it seemed, was the use of "D-Stretch," the decorrelation stretch program developed by Jon Harman, who presented the tool during the Society's Conference Plenary Session on Friday morning.

This program, built on the open source *ImageJ* (a multi-platform Java tool originally designed for medical imaging) has preset buttons to allow photographers to quickly change the color space of a photograph, bringing out

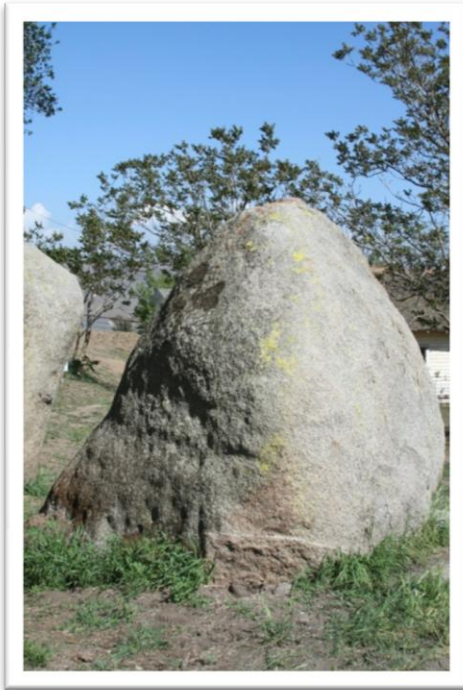
features that were nearly invisible to our unaided eyes. By the end of the tour we recognized several pictographs that had been highlighted in Jon's presentation slides.

The hike to Condor Cave required walking uphill between two large outcrops and then scrambling up several boulders. We were asked to leave hats and packs outside because the ceiling was low and space was tight.

These paintings were protected from the elements and the paint much brighter than in those outside. I



I crouched down and edged towards the back of the cave to lie down on the stare at the immense painting of a large bird, perhaps a condor. I later learned that the Blue Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, set aside as condor habitat, was located on a ridge just east of Yokohl Valley.



How were the paintings made? The vivid reds, blacks and whites were created from natural minerals: hematite, magnetite, kaolinite, charcoal and graphite. A binder of wild cucumber juice and milkweed was used to make the paint stick to the rocks. All of these substances are locally available. We saw many plants around the rocks including introduced horehound, *datura*, wild cucumber, blue dicks, fiddleheads and grasses.

As we walked to Bear Cave, we saw many bedrock mortars on the more level-topped outcrops, and two large standing rocks covered on their sides with cupules. Nearby was a small cave where young women stayed during a ceremony held after their first menses. At the end of the ceremony, the young woman pecked a new cupule on one of the rocks. The newest cupule was four years old.

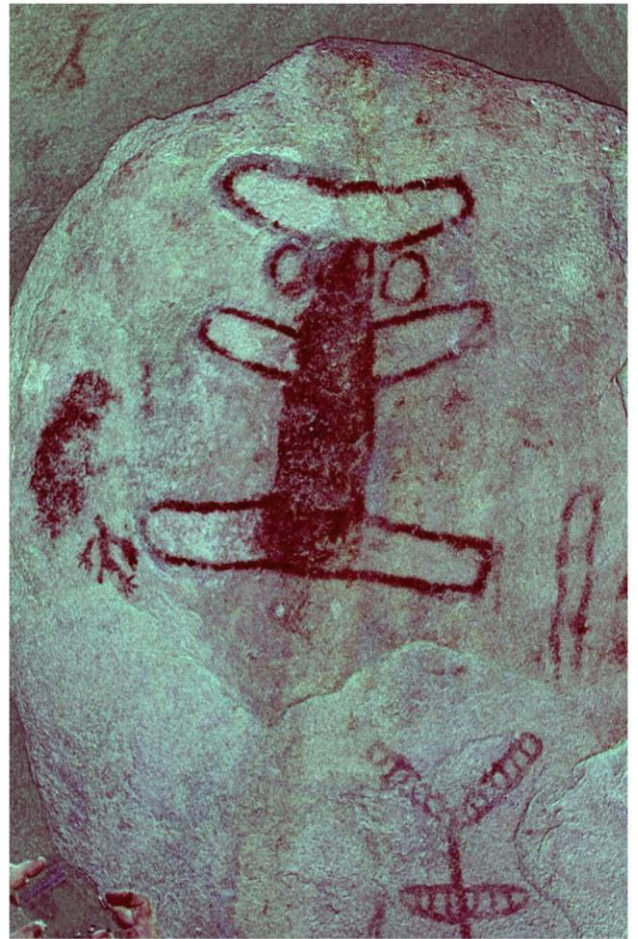
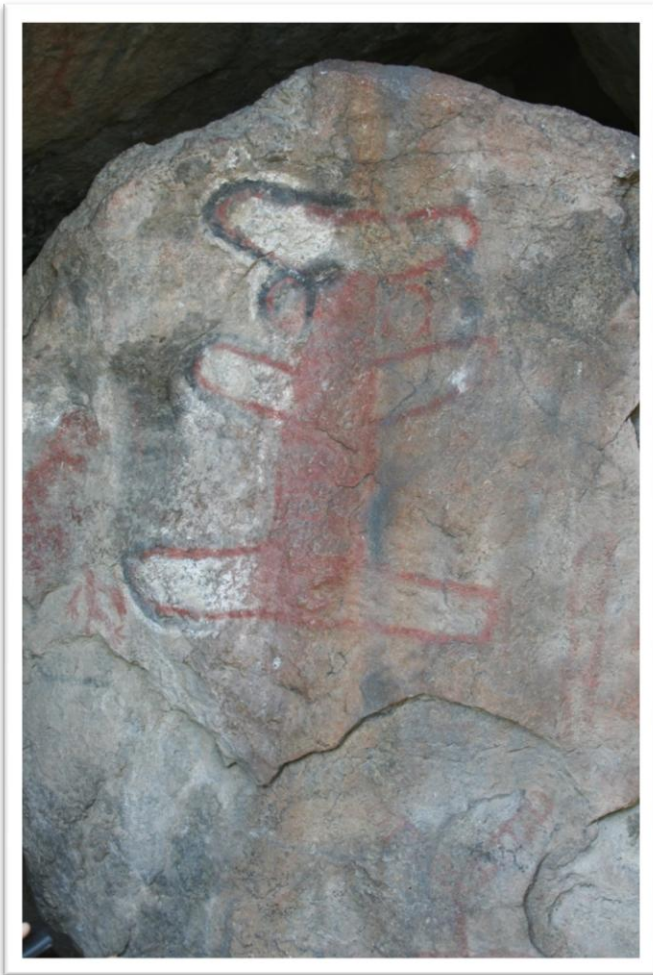
Getting to Bear Cave required a strenuous scramble. Our guides helped us up a ladder to the top of the most difficult boulder. At the mouth of the cave was a rounded figure of a bear that appeared to be wearing earrings. Our guides said that this was the place for women to give birth.



Once at the mouth of the cave, to my left, was a painting of a woman giving birth and her infant, a coyote and a condor cape. Below this was a row of what appeared to be fuzzy sheep in a line.



To my right, I saw more paintings, and also farther back in the cave, another bear painting...



We left by a different route that was somewhat easier. Perhaps this is how women entered the cave. Downhill, near the parking area, we stopped at a pair of balancing rocks. Here was the “ghost” figure Jon Harman’s plenary presentation. To our unaided eyes, there was a blank-faced figure with rounded limbs and a double outline and a defined breast. In fact, there is a second figure in red on the “hip” of the “ghost” with an arm outstretched. D-Stretch also changed the reddish blobs around the figure into handprints.

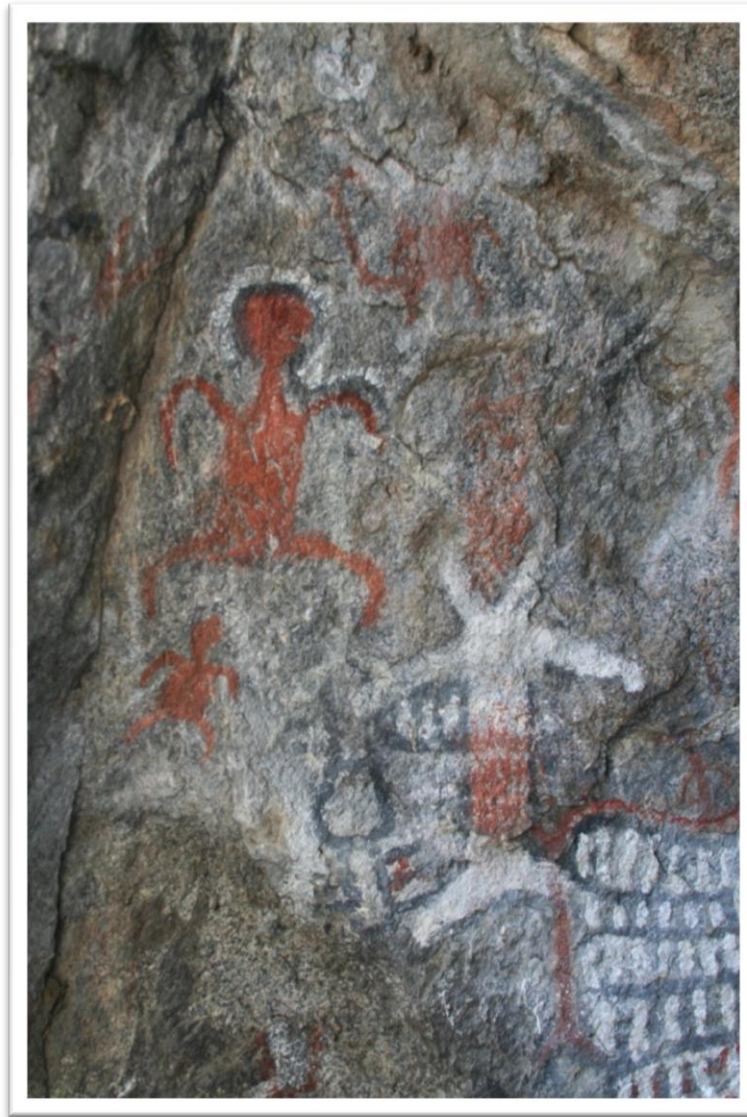
Before we regrouped to leave, I sat on a boulder and gazed out at the peaceful landscape, and took a few moments to think about what I saw in terms of the greater landscape. Our guides told us that this was a village and a gathering place. Here was a huge hill of rounded granite outcrops interspersed with oak trees which is noticeably different from the hills around it. All around to the east and south was the flat Yokohl Creek Valley and many rounded hills covered with grass and a few outcrops of very dark rock.



Running down Yokohl Valley to terminate in Owens Valley near Olancho, was the Jordan Toll Trail, partly based on the traditional trails of Jordan's Indian trail builders. To the east were the higher peaks of the Sierra Nevada, nearly invisible in the haze. I imagined soaring condors instead of ravens. Did it always look this way? One old name for Rocky Hill is "Live Oak Place." It seems an unlikely name if all the hills were oak covered, so maybe we were seeing a landscape that was, barring roads, farmhouses, palm trees, and smog, much the same as it was two hundred years ago.

I was glad I turned out for the field trips, although I missed some interesting talks at the conference. The Archaeological Conservancy, the Foothill Yokuts, Manuel Andrade and others were generous with their time, assistance and information about the site. If I get a chance to revisit Rocky Hill, I will stand back and photograph whole rock faces, and perhaps bring a wider angle lens. Jon Harman has altered an inexpensive point-and-shoot digital camera so that you can see what you are shooting at the time. It's a great idea.

On the drive back to Visalia, I noticed the crest of the next hill north of Rocky Hill was lined with houses. I didn't know the area at all, so when I got home, I used Google Earth to take a look. Exeter is very close by, just across the hill. A little internet research revealed plans for a 10,000 home, 30,000-person community to be developed by the J.G. Boswell Company (Yokohl Ranch Company, LLC) of San Diego on 36,000 acres of Yokohl Valley. There appears to be significant organized opposition to the plan for a variety of reasons. A Draft EIR is expected very soon.

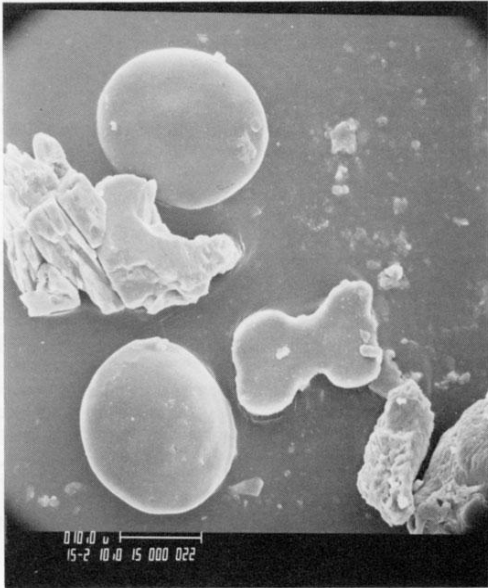


For more information about Rocky Hill, please visit **The Archaeological Conservancy** website (<http://www.archaeologicalconservancy.org>). The **Southern Sierra Archaeological Society** (PO Box 1973, Visalia CA 93279, 559-781-8842) invites interested people to join them in their mission to protect rock art sites. The pictures accompanying this article cannot do the place justice, so visit Jon Harman's website for "A Field Trip to Rocky Hill" <http://www.dstretch.com/RockyHill/RockyHill.html>, or search for "Rocky Hill Exeter California" on Google, which will take you to an interesting YouTube video.

Ancient pollen reveals how humans shaped forests

Edited from Smithsonian.com [<http://tinyurl.com/ggxd7l9>]

March 5, 2014



A new study of pollen samples from tropical forests in Southeast Asia suggests humans have shaped these landscapes for thousands of years, finding signs of imported seeds, plants cultivated for food, and land clearance as early as 11,000 years ago - around the end of the last Ice Age.

Researchers led by palaeo-ecologist Chris Hunt, of Queen's University, Belfast, analyzed existing data and examined samples from Borneo, Sumatra, Java, Thailand and Vietnam.

Pollen offers an important key for unlocking the history of human activity. [Image (left) of grass pollen from Kansas, USA; courtesy University of Kansas]. It can survive for thousands of years in the right conditions, and paint a picture of vegetation over time.

In the Kelabit Highlands of Borneo, for example, pollen samples dated to about 6,500 years ago contain abundant evidence of fire. Scientists know that specific weeds and trees that flourish in charred ground would typically emerge in the wake of naturally occurring or accidental blazes, but what Hunt's team found instead was evidence of fruit trees.

"This indicates that the people who inhabited the land intentionally cleared it of forest vegetation and planted sources of food in its place. It has long been believed that the rainforests of the Far East were virgin wildernesses, where human impact has been minimal," Hunt says.

This kind of research could also present powerful information for people who live in these forests today. According to Hunt, "Laws in several countries in Southeast Asia do not recognize the rights of indigenous forest dwellers on the grounds that they are nomads who leave no permanent mark on the landscape." The long history of forest management traced by this study, he says, offers these groups "a new argument in their case against eviction."





UPCOMING GENERAL MEETINGS

All General Meetings are held at the historic Sesnon House on the campus of Cabrillo College, located at 6500 Soquel Drive, Aptos, CA and begin promptly at 7:30 PM.

May 15, 2014

Guest Speaker: Lois Robin

"Mamita's House: A True Tale of Tortilla Flat"

Lois will talk about a California Indian family in transition from tribal to contemporary life as she shows photos from her book *Mamita's House: A True Tale of Tortilla Flat*. They lived in a Carmel house from 1900 to 1945 in a neighborhood called Tortilla Flat during difficult times when Indians were disparaged and the Depression was endemic. Through resourcefulness and stamina, the legendary Mamita found a way for her family to thrive while retaining their Indian identity. John Steinbeck came to the house and neighborhood to gather material for his books. His first successful book, *Tortilla Flat*, was published in 1935, and although his book was fictional, his characters were based on those he found at Mamita's House. The talk will include photos and descriptions of these characters. A surprise guest in the story is the infamous bandit Tuburcio Vasquez, who was related to the family.



Lois Robin, a SCAS member, is a local writer/photographer with degrees from UCLA and UCSB. But her creative life began with classes at Cabrillo College in photography and anthropology. Rob Edwards was a mentor and a consultant on her first project, a photo story exhibit, *Indian Ghosts at California Missions*. Happily, Rob has continued to be invaluable. *Indian Ghosts* was followed by an adjunct exhibit *We Are Still Here* with photos of contemporary Indian people whose ancestors were in the California Missions. Her photos

have appeared in magazines and books including the Time/Life book *The California Indian*, and various textbooks. Her article about California Indian methods of birth control was published in the *Encyclopedia of Birth Control*. She collaborated for many years with Patrick Orozco, headman of the Pajaro Valley Ohlone Indian Council, with various types of documentation needed for his tribal purposes. Patrick's story, *I'm an Indian, but Who am I?* appeared in the *Journal of Great Basin Anthropology*. She has attended and presented at many California Indian Conferences and has visited tribal groups throughout California to document their dances and events.

An aficionado of the California landscape, her backyard is filled with native plants used by Indian People, and her commitment to environmentalism is evident in her work as the 20-year chair of the Sierra Club's Pajaro River Watershed Committee and her production of two videos focusing on local rivers. To some extent this diversity comes together on her website www.loisrobin.com.

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