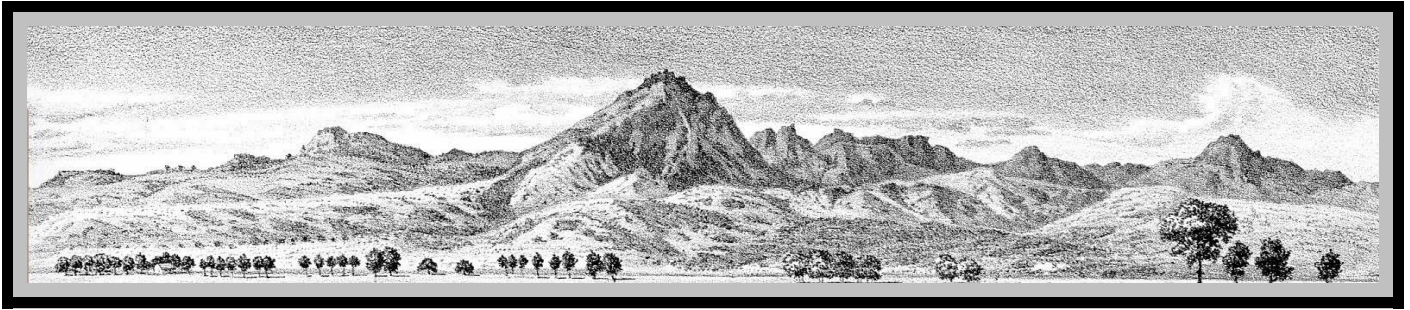


THE MIDDLE MOUNTAIN FOUNDATION

The Sutter Buttes Land Trust



from Thompson & West History of Sutter County 1879

SPRING 2004

A Naturalist's Ways of Seeing

By Walt Anderson

“What is a naturalist, really?” writes David Cavagnaro in the foreword to my book, *The Sutter Buttes: A Naturalist's View*. “A naturalist, I think, is first a person of the Earth, a shaman really, one who feels as well as sees, one who simply **knows** with greater breadth and depth than intellect alone can muster. Second, a naturalist is an interpreter, one who can translate the complex language of nature into the vocabulary of the common man, one who can reach out to us from the heart of the natural world and lead us in.”

I would add that a naturalist is one who **cultivates imagination**, who facilitates seeing more, sensing connections, developing deeper levels of awareness, understanding, and appreciation. A good naturalist is not someone who merely knows the names of plants and animals and geologic structures; he or she helps others find a point of entry into communication with nature, to be able to listen in on some of the many conversations going on there.

The Sutter Buttes is a vast library of information, an infinite source of nature's stories. My Sutter Buttes book introduces many of these stories and provides a template for understanding other stories stimulated by one's own observations. My words touch on such unlikely subjects as the ecology of dungflies attracted to a cowpie, the relationship of mistletoe berries and birds, the apparent enigma of the rounded hills within the moat (a geological puzzle), and the mating strategies of bullfrogs.

This coming March I will be returning to the Buttes to resume a love affair with this landscape that has lasted almost thirty years. I will be taking people into the heart of that special range and sharing stories through the visual prompts of color slides. As always, I will be encouraging the development of **informed imagination**. With that limitless tool, it is possible to see beyond the superficial. For example, where one person might see a cliff of layered rock, another with the gift of informed imagination might see a lakebed filling over thousands of years with fragments

of the surrounding hills, sediments compressed and cemented again as rock, lifted to the heights by volcanic nudgings from below, breaking asunder bit by bit by chisels of ice and solutions of rain, particles carried by gravity to a new valley below. In that way of seeing, the cliff is nothing less than an astounding chronicle in deep time.

The possibility of learning from nature's stories – that perhaps is the greatest service provided by the Middle Mountain Foundation. When wonderful landscapes like the Sutter Buttes are badly degraded, we look at the land in a different way. There is pain instead of pleasure, guilt instead of gratitude. Ultimately our capacity to love is diminished by such degradation. The great stories die, and our souls become impoverished.

But when we all care **enough**, when we work together to protect the land and share its stories, we become more than we were before. We then become a part of the Buttes in much the same way as the eagle that soars over its peaks, the ringtail that prowls in the oak grove by night, the poppies that open in the morning sun to spread their own golden riches. So join with me, with the caring landowners and directors and naturalists of the Middle Mountain Foundation, to support the Sutter Buttes in every way possible. If we do, the land will respond and give us its profound stories.



The Mission of the Middle Mountain Foundation

The Middle Mountain Foundation works to maintain the natural, cultural, and historic qualities of the Sutter Buttes for present and future generations.

Strategic Goals

1. Identify and permanently protect significant lands in the Sutter Buttes by working collaboratively with landowners, accepting conservation easements, and utilizing other private, voluntary land conservation tools.
2. Educate the public about the cultural, pastoral, and geological nature of the Sutter Buttes as a living and historic treasure. Provide opportunities for personal experiences in the Sutter Buttes to foster a fuller and deeper appreciation of them.
3. Increase awareness about the mission and programs of the Middle Mountain Foundation.
4. Develop an organization that is effective and sustainable. Continually improve the effectiveness of Board, committees, staff, and volunteers. Obtain and manage funds needed to carry out the mission of the Middle Mountain Foundation.

Special Thank You

The Middle Mountain Foundation acknowledges the following contributors and individuals:
Joni Adams, Ludel Bouchard, Dorothy Ettl, Rich King, Elinor Knox, Karen Morrison, Pete Sands, Al and Bonnie Thoma, Joan Robertson West, Sacramento Magazine, Sutter County Memorial Museum, Sir Speedy Printing, Mary Spilman Crane, Our new Members, Our Volunteers, Our Advisors, And especially those of you who made donations to the Foundation this past year!

In Honor of

Rachel and John Bertoni

In Memory of

Donations have been received in memory of:
Lyleann Chumbley
Geraldine Jenkins

Walt Anderson Returns to Sutter Buttes

Special events highlight our hiking season in the Buttes this spring. Walt Anderson, naturalist, photographer, artist, writer, and professor of Environmental Studies at Prescott College in Arizona, returns to the Sutter Buttes for a week long series of educational programs and outings in the Buttes.

It was Walt Anderson who initiated guided public access into the privately owned Buttes during the fall of 1976. This program eventually evolved into the Sutter Buttes Naturalists, predecessor of the Middle Mountain Foundation.

It was Walt Anderson who penned in 1983 *The Sutter Buttes, A Naturalist's View*, an encyclopedic volume encompassing the Buttes' geologic origins, engaging descriptions and a complete cataloging of its flora and fauna, and reflections about the impact of Man upon its landscape.

We have assembled a liberal agenda to enable you to renew your acquaintance with Walt or perhaps to meet him for the first time. He has our keys to the Buttes and will be guiding tours on March 27th, 28th, and April 2nd, 3rd and 4th. We suggest you make reservations as soon as possible as these outings are sure to fill up quickly.

We have also scheduled free public receptions for the evenings of March 26 and a reading from his new book, *Inland Island, The Sutter Buttes* on April 6th. The book publisher is hoping to have initial production runs completed for sale at these events!

Walt moved out of this area in 1985, but his heart is still in the Middle Mountain. Come and spend a day in the Buttes with him or attend one of his evening programs. A Sutter Buttes experience with Walt Anderson will stay with you always.

Inland Island Benefits Conservation Work in the Buttes

One of the Strategic goals of the Middle Mountain Foundation is to "Educate the public about the cultural, pastoral, and geological nature of the Sutter Buttes as a living and historic treasure." Walt's book, *Inland Island: the Sutter Buttes* is, second only to a first-hand experience in the Buttes, our most important educational resource to foster public awareness and appreciation of an irreplaceable landscape. So the MMF Board of Directors has committed to underwrite a portion of the publication expenses of this new edition. All of the profits of each book purchased locally contribute to our conservation work in the Sutter Buttes.

NEW BOOK ABOUT THE SUTTER BUTTES

“Nature and books belong to eyes that see them.” These words, attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson, are a uniquely appropriate introduction for Walt Anderson and the Sutter Buttes.

Emerson’s words take on increased significance when nature inspires the writing of a book that provokes its readers to explore natural landscapes, as is the case with *Inland Island, the Sutter Buttes*, a new publication of what began as a revision of *the Sutter Buttes, a Naturalist’s View*.

This new edition draws copy from the original text, but it is so significantly revised and expanded that it is indeed a new book. It features color photos and updated information that includes the results of several research projects in the Buttes over the past twenty years. New geological assessments and refined mapping, and long-term mammal research findings have dramatically expanded our understanding of the natural history of a unique environment. What could have ended up as a lethargic tome is rather a delightfully educational and entertainingly readable handbook.

Walt writes, “Anyone who has looked out from the foothills on either side of the Central Valley on a foggy winter day to see the summits of the Buttes rising in majestic isolation above the misty gray blanket has seen the Buttes as an **island**. In times of flood, the description is literal, the edges of the Buttes littoral. But even when “the tide is out,” the range is a biogeographic island, where organisms once connected to the foothills through vegetative communities of cooler, wetter times are now stuck in this pile of rocks. This perspective is woven throughout my narrative, and it is as a unique inland island that the Sutter Buttes may one day be given the conservation recognition it deserves.

“As was true for *The Sutter Buttes: A Naturalists’ View*, this new treatment, *Inland*

Island: The Sutter Buttes, is intended as a catalyst, a jumping-off point for your own future discoveries. There is more than one way that you as reader can navigate this book. The stories are written so that you can open to almost any page and find a narrative that you can follow. You may discover how mistletoe has co-evolved with birds, how dung flies court and mate, or how Black Rails may have been hiding in the rice fields out of sight of nosy naturalists for years. Many of these stories are models of how to see and interpret nature; you can use the examples to help you make sense of your own observations in nature. And you can simply have an enjoyable literary experience; the stories are meant to be accessible and fun.

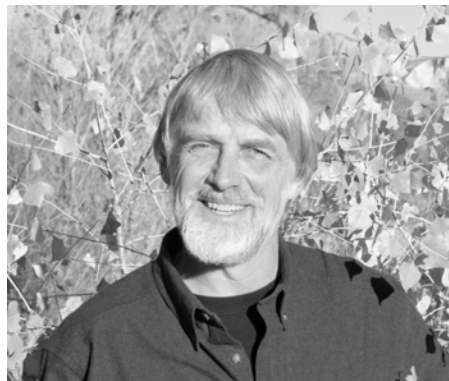
“That’s one of my major goals: to encourage you to move beyond the stories herein to **experience** nature in ways that may not have occurred to you before.

“So read the words, but let them have some freedom in your mind. Once the words have left the page to mingle with others in the fertile broth of your imagination, let them find their natural connections. Let them help you to see the Sutter Buttes and all of nature in new and meaningful ways. The way of the naturalist can open portals to imagination...”

As our spring newsletter goes to press, final publication details are still being negotiated. *The Inland Island: the Sutter Buttes* will be available at the Sutter County Museum, and our new Middle Mountain Foundation website, as well as the usual retail outlets.

Readers who pick up Walt’s book will be intrigued by its content so they will want to walk in the Buttes with us. Many hikers who experience a day-long trek with us will hunger to learn more and come back ready to purchase his book! Nature and this book belong to eyes that see them.

See for yourself!



Spring 2004 Hike Schedule

February	22	Geology Trek - Bragg Canyon
March	7	Summit Ascent - Bragg Canyon Ridge Trek - Bragg Canyon
March	28	Summit Ascent Wildlife in the Buttes Summit Ascent - Bragg Canyon Ridge Trek - Bragg Canyon*
April	3	Summit Ascent Gentle Stroll Full Moon Stroll Peace Valley Historical Tour*
April	10	Peace Valley Historical Tour
April	18	Summit Ascent - North Butte Nature's Bounty
April	24	Evening Serenade
May	15	Bat Research Field Trip

* Led by Walt Anderson

Middle Mountain Foundation Interpretive Program

Middle Mountain Foundation interpretive program provides access to the privately owned Sutter Buttes hillsides and peaks. Tour guides share its unique origins and history and examine with you a natural ecology that has become increasingly rare in our time.

A day in the Buttes begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends around 3:00 p.m. (except for evening trips). Trips are scheduled to proceed in all but the most severe weather conditions. Participants should be prepared to expect uneven footing, stepping over rocks and boulders, crossing streams, and hill climbing. Spring hikers are likely to encounter wet, squishy, ankle-deep grass, while fall trekkers will be contending with thistles and stickers. Poison oak is abundant, but you will be warned of its proximity. Rattlesnakes, though common in the warmer seasons, are usually reclusive and inactive during our hiking seasons.

Individuals and families may reserve a date for one of the public hikes by calling Michelle at (530) 671-6116 or by email at mmfhikes@yahoo.com. Cost is \$30.00 per person (Members: \$27.00). If a catered lunch or dinner is included, there is a small additional charge.

Organizations may schedule a charter with Margit at (530) 846-5142 after 5:00 pm. The cost for charters is \$250.00 minimum or \$25.00 per person for groups of ten or more.

Middle Mountain Guided Hikes Descriptions

Bragg Canyon: Hikes designated with the addition of "Bragg Canyon" involve its unique geological and historical features. Members of the Steidlemyer family who will co-lead this hike and contribute a landowner's perspective regarding their historic property.

Massive flat bedrock boulders pocked by centuries of grinding acorns into meal enable us to envision a native people who subsisted in harmony with the seasonal elements of nature.

Up the hill, we encounter the stone basement of a pioneer homestead, complete with a hand dug well - fresh water still collects deep within. On towards the center of the mountain we come upon an old road through the Buttes. Stone retaining walls assembled by hand still hold the roadbed in place. Further in we reach the geographic core of the Buttes. It is the old central lake bed of the Buttes volcano, which resembles a Herculean amphitheater.

Those who are tackling the summit ascent will then make their way up Yana Peak, to inspect the caves high over the canyon. Within their protective shelter, we'll gaze out over the rugged terrain below.

May there always be wild places that will evoke within us the visions and impressions that those before us experienced.

Geology Trek - Bragg Canyon: The violent origins of this tiny mountain range will be revealed on this outing. From the up-thrust pinnacles and the mysterious concentric depression surrounding them, to the smallest pebble at your feet, you will explore and understand one and a half million (1,500,000) years of geologic history with volcanologist Brian Hausback.



Ridge Trek - Bragg Canyon: Pacing ourselves with frequent stops to collect the group, we examine the natural elements of the Buttes during our ridge treks. We stop, look, listen, and learn. These are educational outings in which we develop an appreciation for nature's intricate web. A view from the ridge tops really puts into perspective the need to preserve wild places like the Sutter Buttes. The trek involves some steep uphill, but anyone who is in good health and exercises regularly can handle this outing.

Summit Ascent: A climb up to the top of "The World's Smallest Mountain Range" will test even the most experienced trekkers. Summit ascents are strenuous and physically challenging. Inclines are steep and narrow. We avoid those routes that might entail hand over hand climbing. Rather we set a pace that is conducive to periodic rests to catch our breath and share anecdotes about the peak's history and what we're encountering along the way. The elevation gain is 1,000 feet at a steep 30% slope.

Wildlife in the Buttes: Taking the time to enjoy nature's diversity along the way, we'll look for tracks and other signs of wildlife in Brockman Canyon on the southwest side of the Buttes. Bring your camera, binoculars, and wear boots with good ankle support. We will have some steep cross-slope and uphill hiking with a gain of 1,200 feet. Walking sticks are very helpful. We'll eat lunch atop West Butte and view Butte Sink to the northwest, Gray Lodge to the north, and golden eagle nests across the canyon. Perhaps one will be occupied! Your leader, Gene Trapp, professor emeritus at CSU Sacramento, has led mammalogy field trips here for over 20 years.

Continued on page 5

Hike Descriptions

Continued from page 4

Gentle Stroll: It is not the distance, but the experiences encountered within that makes the journey. Join us for a leisurely stroll especially suited for casual walkers and nature lovers. This hike will be an excellent venue for photographers and artists. There will be minimal inclines but plan on possible uneven terrain and muddy areas. Bring water and lunch, wear sturdy shoes, and come prepared for changing weather conditions.

Peace Valley Historical Tour: Walk back into history within Peace Valley, remotely sequestered behind the hilly ramparts on the North side of the Buttes.

The State Parks Department has recently acquired this parcel, and they have authorized us to provide limited public access as they evaluate the proper balance of preserving its natural features while utilizing it for recreation and education.

Our guides, working with State Parks personnel, will take you on a tour that will reveal one million years of geologic history.

We will also discover how wildlife and indigenous plants have co-evolved in symbiotic parity, and how introduced exotic species have tipped the scales, necessitating management of the landscape. We will locate artifacts of the native stone-age culture that existed in harmony with their surroundings for centuries; we will see the remains of pioneer settlements that are over 100 years old.

Nature's Bounty: Discover nature's bounty at your feet as we explore the seasonal flora of the Sutter Buttes. As a "gatherer" in spirit, learn how the Native Americans utilized local plants for their everyday living. This easy-paced, interactive trek is appropriate for hikers of all ages. Bring an extra bottle of water, an "Ace"-type hair comb, and a small hand towel.

Full Moon Stroll: Observation and reflection on nature's balance will be our focus on this meander through sun dappled oak groves and gentle hillsides. We begin as shadows lengthen and soon the setting sun casts a golden glow on the natural world around us. As familiar colors fade to shades of gray, the creatures of the night begin to stir. We're likely to encounter bats fluttering about silently screaming or hear the hoots and screeches of several owls calling or catch the distant yodeling of coyotes on night patrol. We cast our eyes skyward and gaze upon stars that have sparkled for eternity, while a nearly full moon bathes the landscape in a cool bluish fluorescent glow.

Bat Research Field Trip: A rare opportunity for a limited number of participants to witness mammal biologist, Heather Johnson, conducting bat research in the Sutter Buttes after dark.

This extraordinary outing begins late in the afternoon as we stroll through the historic Dean Ranch sequestered within the Buttes. Evidence of Native American presence, pioneer history, and the Buttes' volcanic origins will be revealed before we settle in for a box dinner (add \$7.50 extra) and a brief lecture on the importance and benefits of bats in natural and cultivated environments.

We expect to be able to hear the bats' inaudible echolocation chatter with her ultrasonic detector as they forage for insects over a pond. We may even hear the bird-like chirp of the largest bat to be found on the North American continent! And with a little luck, we may get to see her capture and identify several of the eleven bat species thus far documented in the Buttes. But we can't guarantee how many bats we will encounter.

Membership Appeal

"Man is not himself only.... He is all that he sees; all that flows to him from a thousand sources.... He is the land, the lift of its mountain lines, the reach of its valleys." - Mary Austin

Words such as these convey the sense of ownership that humans have of their environment. One has only to look around - do your community surroundings resemble their appearance of fifty years ago? Even five years? Chances are, they do not! As our communities enlarge with ever-growing populations, it is important that we have a clear vision of where we want to go, what we endeavor to achieve, and the means to achieve those goals.

The Middle Mountain Foundation is continuing to evolve as a strong organizational presence, not only in the Yuba-Sutter County areas, but also throughout the Sacramento Valley. Our respect for the land, its owners and their rights, is reflected in our mission statement and community involvement. Our activities, among others, include educating the public through our interpretive hiking program and informational booths at local events, encouraging dialogue between landowners and community leaders, initiating school education programs, and expanding our involvement in the development of conservation easements.

Your continued support is an affirmation of our common beliefs and accomplishments, allowing us to work together cooperatively in the preservation of the Sutter Buttes. Please establish or renew your membership today to help ensure their natural presence for future generations. Thank you!

Middle Mountain Foundation Budget 2004

Revenue	
Donations - General	\$ 5,000
Donations - Follow-up	2,000
Open Hikes/Charters	26,000
Membership (500)	10,000
Web Store	3,400
Interest Income	500
Total Revenue	\$46,000
Operating Expenses	
Administration	\$ 3,750
Board Development	1,600
Interpretive Program	5,200
Newsletter	16,500
Operations	3,900
Web Store	6,050
Public Relations/Publicity	1,600
Total Operating Expenses	\$41,100
Total Funds Available over Expenditures	\$ 5,800
Transfer to Land Acquisition Fund	\$ 3,000
Walt Anderson Book Repayment	\$ 2,500
Remainder	\$ 300

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To:

In this issue: A Naturalist's Ways of Seeing, Walt Anderson Returns to the Sutter Buttes, Inland Island Benefits Conservation Work in the Buttes, New Book about the Sutter Buttes, Spring 2004 Hike Schedule, Membership Appeal, MMF Budget 2004

President's Corner

Every organization evolves over time. This is true of the Middle Mountain Foundation. From its inception in the 1970s to 2000 we provided public access to the Sutter Buttes as part of an interpretative program. With the emphasis on development in the Buttes the last few years, the Middle Mountain Foundation is making preservation of the Sutter Buttes a high priority. We look forward to working with State Parks in providing guided access in Peace Valley. See our interpretative program schedule for hikes in there this Spring.

We invite you to visit our web site (www.middlemountain.org). After February 1 we will have a web store that offers a selection of Middle Mountain and Sutter Buttes items.

Thanks to an active Board, good advisors, guides, and volunteers, we are maintaining an active presence in the Sutter Buttes. If you can volunteer some time, we need help with publicity, fund raising, promotions, and our historical archives.

We encourage you to support the Sutter Buttes by becoming a member of the Middle Mountain Foundation for 2004 and/or making a donation to support our operations.

Contact Us

The Middle Mountain Foundation is a group of dedicated individuals who work on a part time basis – most of us volunteering our time. Communication with us usually means leaving a message and waiting for us to get back to you.

You can reach the Middle Mountain Foundation

- at our web site (www.middlemountain.org),
- by email (middlemountain@yahoo.com),
- by calling our hike coordinator, Michelle Bouchard, at (530) 671-6116 between 8 am and 8 p.m.,
- by mailing us at PO Box 483, Live Oak, CA 95953-0483.

Phone calls will be picked up when possible and messages will be returned that evening or the next day. Email messages will be returned every couple of days and our mail on a weekly basis. Our goal is to greet and inform the public and to promote our programs. In the meantime, we appreciate your patience, and especially, your interest in the Sutter Buttes.