



Chip Scheuer

If it weren't for Nearys Lagoon, these ducks would be gasping and grouching about the crummy weather.

## Weather has water officials edgy

By MELANIE MUNK  
STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE  
REGISTER-Pajaronian  
February 11, 1988

REFERENCE

A week of temperatures in the 70s has brought folks outdoors in droves after a damp January and some freezing nights in early February — and has also caused Santa Cruz city officials to begin worrying about their water supply.

Lee Clark, state parks supervising ranger for the area, said there had been some busy times at the beaches during the last 10 days, but they haven't been overcrowded.

"Natural Bridges was busy last weekend because it was

the last week of Monarch butterfly season, but other than that, it's been quiet," Clark said.

"The weekend coming up — with the three-day weekend — will be real big, a major crowd-attractor. Whenever the weather is nice for this long weekend in February, the campgrounds

will be filled by Friday evening. We don't take reservations, but we've had a lot of calls."

On the other hand, concerns over low water tables and the high usage associated with warmer weather are well founded, at least in Santa Cruz.

Bill Kocher, water director for the city of Santa Cruz, said this morning that the Santa Cruz area was in a "double whammy" situation.

"When our reservoir is low, which it is now, we fill it artificially from the river. Now the river is low. It looks like there's going to be a big problem."

Kocher said representatives from the water district would go the City Council Feb. 23 with a Drought Contingency Plan.

"Historically, we were in a similar situation in February 1986 and on Valentine's Day we got enough rain to overflow the reservoir," Kocher said. "And we could get some good rains in March — it's happened. But every sunny day that goes by means a more serious situation."

Kocher advised Santa Cruz area residents to watch their outdoor water use, which means sprinkling, lawn-watering and car-washing.

"It's to the point now where every drop counts," Kocher said.

Watsonville and Soquel are suffering no such ill effects.

Engineer Robert Logan, with the Soquel Creek Water District, said the district relied on groundwater and that this type of warm weather didn't really affect the water levels.

"Periods of warm weather cause more consumption, sure, but it's no problem for us unless it goes on for a year or so," Logan said. "It's noticeable, but not significant."

Jon Nichols, water engineer for the city of Watsonville, echoed Logan's

statements.

"We're only marginally affected," he said. "It would take a period of months before there was any significant change in the groundwater."

Some flower-growers, especially those growing bulbs such as iris and daffodils, wish the weather pattern had shown up a week earlier.

Dennis Stevenson, of Sunbay Wholesale Florists, said the cold nights kept bulb production low, then the

warm weather brought on heavy quantities — but too late for Valentine's Day.

"The heavy bulb production missed Valentine's Day by a couple of days," Stevenson said. "The prices will start going down, especially now that Lent has started. A good market won't come up again until St. Patrick's Day."

Local iris grower Steve Dautoff, of Dautoff Nursery, said he too wished the warm weather had come a week earlier.

"Basically, the cool nights and warm days made the crop come on evenly, so we'll get a good price, but it would have been nice to get it for Valentine's Day," Dautoff said.

Other crops have not been significantly affected by the long stretch of warm weather.

And more of the same is predicted through the three-day weekend, with highs in the 70s, lows in the upper 30s or 40s and some patchy fog in the mornings.