

COWGIRL CAMARADERIE

REIGNS AT **BUCKARETTE** RANCH RIDE

by **Robyn Rominger**





“As women, you always want to share things. I think that’s how it got started — it was just us wanting to share what we have here.”

—CLAUDIA VOGT
Co-owner of Elk Creek Buckarettie Ranch Ride

Scores of cowgirls recently saddled up for the Elk Creek Buckarettie Ranch Ride, a weekend adventure in western Glenn County that rustically captured the spirit of the Old West—sans cowboys.

The ranch ride was designed by Claudia Vogt, Kathy Landini and Pinie Minto, three friends—all married with children—who live on commercial cattle ranches and wanted to share their lifestyle with other women.

Held at Three Creeks Ranch, the riding retreat offers women authentic Western hospitality and plenty of cowgirl camaraderie. The 5,000-acre ranch, owned by Chet Vogt, is located in a remote area about 100 miles northwest of Sacramento, in a pristine setting adjacent to the Mendocino National Forest.

Vogt explained how the Buckarettie Ranch Ride began. “As women, you always want to share things,” she said. “I think that’s how it got started—it was just us wanting to share what we have here.”

Landini said, “A very high percentage of horses are owned by women for recreational purposes, and a lot of stuff is geared towards women and their horses. That’s obviously what this is geared towards: women who want to be in the country. They love their horses, they want to be with other women who love horses and just have a vacation. And that’s what we’re giving them.”

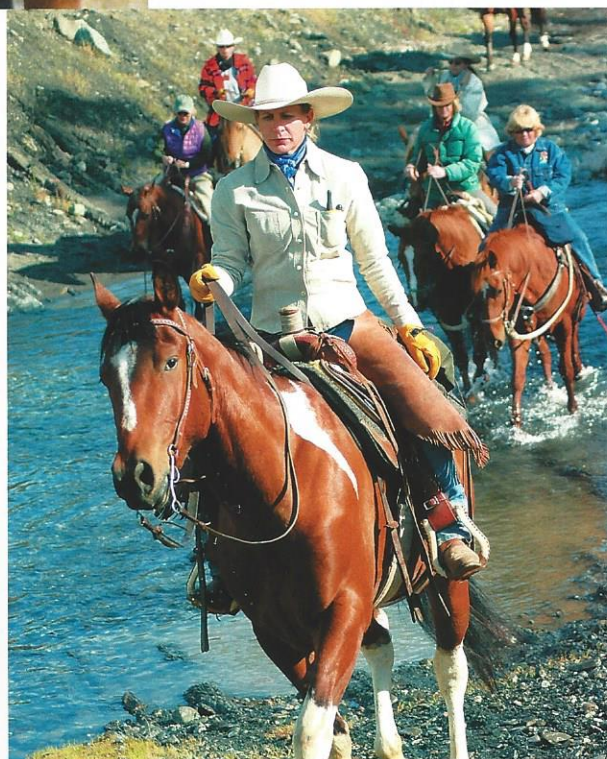
In many cases, “women come here who don’t know anybody—they have their horse and they come by themselves,” Landini said, noting that women came from as far away as Missouri to

participate in this year’s event.

The wide open spaces beckon the Buckaretties to go trail riding with their trusty steeds daily. The women, who represent all levels of horsemanship, are guided by “wranglerettes” along miles of trails, up and down grass-covered, oak-studded hills, across shallow streams and past homestead sites and Native American camps abandoned many years ago. They catch glimpses of furry and feathered wildlife while they enjoy the great outdoors. There are several different trail rides with names such as the Vista del Valle ride and the Briscoe Creek ride.

The rides highlight the beauty of the progressive cattle ranch that is committed to sustainable grazing and riparian habitat restoration. The Buckaretties also offer co-ed wildflower rides during the spring bloom.

During this year’s Otter Ridge ride, the women rode horses representing a wide array of breeds: quarter horse, paint, thoroughbred, appaloosa, Morgan, Friesian draft horse, Pony of the Americas—even a red mule. The fact that they were riding on a working cattle ranch became evident when they reached a sizeable herd of cows and calves roaming through a mountain meadow. Softly



Opposite, from left, Brea McGrew, Claudia Vogt and Karen Stone joined other equestriennes for a weekend adventure in western Glenn County. Above left, cowgirls celebrate a victory during a friendly ranch competition. Above right, the Buckaretties ride their horses across a shallow stream.

Photos/Robyn Rominger

spoken commands of “whoa” and “easy” could be heard as the women brought their horses to a stop, allowing the cattle herd to pass by.

Trail riding is just one of several horsey activities: The weekend getaway also includes a

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Above, roping skills were refined during the “ladies and lassos” clinic. Below, a silver trophy belt buckle was the grand prize for the winner of the ranch horse competition.

BUCKARETTES

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“ladies and lassos” clinic, in which participants learn roping skills on a “roping dummy,” (i.e., a green metal steer which is pulled behind an all-terrain vehicle inside a huge arena). There’s a ranch horse competition, which showcases the horse-and-rider’s ability to handle trail obstacles and maneuver through a reining pattern.

“This year we’re taking some of our skills that we learned in our roping clinic into our ranch horse competition,” Minto said. “Most of our women are never exposed to this stuff—they never have a chance to compete in an atmosphere that is supportive of them, and this is the place that they can do that.

“We have some nice prizes,” she added.

The grand prize is a custom-made trophy belt buckle made by Elk Creek Silversmiths, which is owned by Chet Vogt.

There’s also the friendly “camp competition,” which features teams of three Buckarettas competing in three light-hearted events where the participants are judged on their originality and ability to have fun. In addition, a Sunday morning church service is offered.

After a day of horsin’ around, the women tie their equine companions to a picket line and mosey on over to the Buckarette Saloon, a huge tent decorated with old ranch memorabilia. Once inside, they can lounge by the Buckarette Bar, listen to country music, share laughter and enjoy catered cowgirl cuisine served on granite ware. At night, the horsewomen hit the hay inside the 15 tents that encircle a common campfire. The accommodations also include the unique Baños de Buckarettas, a horse trailer that has been converted into a shower room.

“My husband (Mike) put a water heater in the tack room and then he built some holes and piped it through, and made the three showers,”

the most that we plan on doing because this time of year is so busy with the kids and the fairs, the horse shows, the brandings and all that stuff,” Landini said.

She noted how pleased they were with the response of visitors to the Buckarettas booth in Red Bluff.

“We were really impressed in Red Bluff with the husbands that came into the booth to get information for their wives to go on this ride,” Landini said. “A lot of husbands had to talk their wives into coming. It’s funny—it’s like women think they shouldn’t do this kind of thing for themselves. They’re wrapped up in their families and husbands. There are quite a few women



Landini said.

“We tried to think of everything that we can do within reason to make it a vacation,” she added. “Those little details are important to people.”

Following the success of the first Buckarette Ranch Ride last year and a marketing campaign that included a booth at the annual Red Bluff Bull & Gelding Sale, they expanded the event to two consecutive weekends this year. “That’s

here that are really lucky women because their husbands did this for them. They knew that their wives needed it, deserved it and they wanted them to have it.”

Vogt said, “It’s hard for women to make that decision to go and do something for themselves and take away from work, take away from kids—it’s the toughest consumer group out there.”

Kathy Chance and Suzanne Stillwell of Chico left their husbands and children at home while

they enjoyed an equestrienne escape.

"We needed to get away and let people wait on us for a change," Stillwell said as she rode Jake, her appendix quarter horse.

Koni Nugent of Modesto said, "Trail rides are usually about 80 percent women anyway, but this one being all-women and especially with four days of camping, that makes it more fun for me. I brought my own horse, of course, a 5-year-old quarter horse mare, and came with a friend. I'm a retired psychiatric nurse. I now work for Hospice part-time and I'm having a good time. My kids are grown up so it's no big deal for me to get here."

Not all the women are horse owners. Marilyn Cundiff of Sacramento rented a horse



"A lot of these people and their horses have never seen country like this. It's just beautiful. That's why they come."

—BREA MCGREW
Elk Creek Buckarette
Ranch Ride Participant



so that she could ride the range for four days. "I get to enjoy all the benefits and don't have to feed a horse 12 months out of the year," Cundiff said.

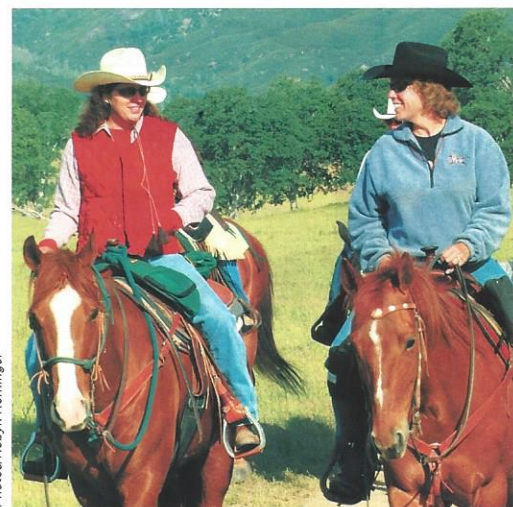
Brea McGrew of Dixon decided to go on the Buckarette Ranch Ride along with her friend, Karen Stone of Woodland, while their husbands did their own thing.

"Karen and I came here the first year and we're back for another round of it," McGrew said. "A lot of these people and their horses

have never seen country like this. It's just beautiful. That's why they come."

For more information on the Elk Creek Buckarette Ranch Ride, call (530) 968-5340 or visit www.elkcreekbuckarettes.com.

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Photos/Robyn Rominger

In top photo, a "wranglerette" adjusts the halter on her horse. Above left, cow penning was one of several activities that the Buckarettes participated in. Above right, Suzanne Stillwell, left, rides Jake, while her friend, Kathy Chance, rides Rusty.