



Tehipite Topics

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A Lethal Cover-Up of a Multi-Million Dollar Mistake ?

by Bridget McGinniss Kerr

In the weeks since the October 25 Yosemite rockslide, it has become clear (from talking to eye witnesses first on the scene, construction contractors, and National Park Service employees) that rock and rock dust did indeed fly into the work site where new buildings, including employee dormitories, are being constructed; and that there were at least two construction workers injured as a result of this rockslide. According to the NPS press release describing the 20 ton rockslide at Curry Village, it appears that park planners believe they can predict exactly how rocks will fall. But what happens when rocks don't behave as they are expected?

Friends of Yosemite Valley, a grassroots environmental citizens' group based in Yosemite, has learned of the existence of a "debris flow study" conducted for the park on this proposed employee dormitory area; however, when FoYV recently inquired about the results of this study (completed in July 2004), they were told by NPS management that it was not available—even through a Freedom of Information Act request—as it was still in draft form. FoYV is currently discussing this issue with Congressman Radanovich's office, as well as alerting the offices of senators Feinstein and Boxer. It is curious that this study of the hows and whys of the deposition of rocks at Curry Village was not finalized before construction commenced on a major employee housing area there.

While park concession employees deserve improved housing, employee health and safety must come first. It is common knowledge that experienced park employees

See *Yosemite*, page 5

Yosemite National Park News Release October 26, 2005

Rockslide in Yosemite National Park
No injuries or damages reported in approximately 20 ton rockfall

A rockfall occurred in Yosemite National Park at approximately 3:45pm on October 25, 2005 near Curry Village in eastern Yosemite Valley. No damage or injuries were reported from falling rocks.

Park officials estimate the rock release to be approximately 20 tons, which fell from about 800 feet above the floor of Yosemite Valley.

The majority of the rock fell into the existing talus slope behind the construction site for the new Curry Village Employee Dormitories. The construction site was designed to allow for rockfall while maintaining the safety of visitors and staff. The "fly rock," or falling debris from the initial release, fell primarily into a parking area under construction.

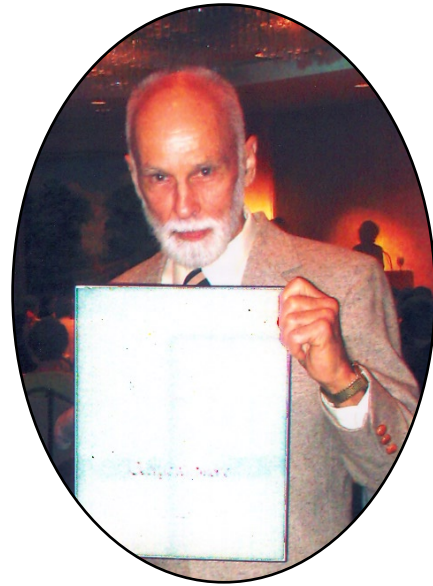
Approximately 200 park visitors were moved to alternative accommodations in Yosemite Valley or El Portal. Facilities were reopened today after an assessment was conducted by a park geologist this morning. ❧



December General Meeting

December 14th at 7:00 P.M.
University of California Center
550 E. Shaw Ave., Fresno
(across from Fashion Fair)

*“Very Important Updates on
Fresno’s Air Quality and Measure C”*
presented by Kevin Hall



Dinner Date with the Speaker

Meet at the Imperial Gardens Restaurant at 5:15 for our monthly no-host “Dinner Date with the Speaker,” an opportunity to interact with fellow Sierrans.

6640 N. Blackstone, east side, just south of Herndon.

Congratulations to George Whitmore

for receiving the 2005 National Sierra Club Susan E. Miller Award. The Susan E. Miller Award honors individual Sierra Club members for exceptional contributions to their chapters. Up to three of these awards are given annually.



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Merced Group

Conservation and Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday, December 8th at 7:00 P.M at Rod Webster's home, 345 E. 20th St., Merced.

Conservation meeting is first, and usually lasts 30-40 minutes. Anyone with an interest in local, state or national conservation issues is welcome. Come just to get informed or get as involved as you wish.

General Meeting

No December General Meeting in lieu of the Annual Banquet on December 1st.

The General Meeting program in January will be on the Riverside Motorsports Park proposed for Atwater. There have been many concerns expressed over various impacts this could bring to our area of the Valley. The E.I.R. was just recently released. You may view the document at www.co.merced.ca.us. Click on Departments > Planning > CEQA Reports > RMP Draft EIR. A CD version is also available at the Merced County Planning office, second floor, 2222 M St., at no charge. Bound copies are available for a fee. At the meeting on January 19th we will discuss the contents of this document and possible ways of responding to it. There are currently just 45 days for public comment (though a request for an additional 45 days will be made.)

Thursday, January 19th at 7:30 P.M.
Sierra Presbyterian Church, 3603 M St.
(M St. and Yosemite Ave., across from Merced College)

Leadership changes

Marsh Pitman has resigned as conservation chair due to family illness. JoAnne Armstrong will take his place, (209) 726-0636, sierrafer@people.com.

Tammy Johnson resigned as membership chair. Taking her place will be Linda Lagace (209) 384-1354.

Treasurer Dave Tucker's correct home phone is (209) 384-1354 (yes, same as Linda's.)

Request for Trip Photos

Choose 20-40 photos from one of your favorite nature outings or vacations. At one of our general meetings this year, we will have five or six people share their adventures with the group. Email photos to Linda Lagace, llagace@bigvalley.net, and she will compile them on one disc so we can project them. OR bring your slides and we'll use a Kodak projector. If you choose the latter, email linda and let her know your topic and how many slides, so she has you on the list for that program.

Outings

See the Tehipite Chapter and Yokuts Group listings. Phone Rod Webster at (209) 723-4747 if you would like to coordinate carpooling with others from our area.

GOING, GOING... GONE?



Sea turtles date back nearly 90 million years and are among the Earth's oldest surviving species. Yet the Kemp's Ridley sea turtle is quickly fading away—it is losing its habitat at an alarming rate. At the Sierra Club, we've mounted a major campaign to defend the Endangered Species Act and preserve threatened habitats before their inhabitants are gone forever.

Please join the Sierra Club today and help protect threatened and endangered animals.

Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



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Check enclosed, made payable to Sierra Club
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Card Number _____

Membership Categories INDIVIDUAL JOINT

INTRODUCTORY \$25

REGULAR \$39 \$47

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

Enclose check and mail to: **F94Q W1300 1**
Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Join!

A Poem About Ugly

by *Bridget McGinniss Kerr*

You wonder why I chose
to clamber on top of a dumpster
to see the construction, rather than,
admiring the autumn
trickle of Yosemite Falls, lingering
at red and yellow brightness of Indian hemp
along meadow edges or hiking the southside trail
to view turning maples against granite;
I wondered why myself.

I think I was drawn to the orange fencing and noise
because I wanted to witness, wanted you to witness
the ugly; sometimes we must.

Over the fence, a rushed project
the size of a city subdivision,
27 future buildings, as you said—desecrating the temple:
petroleum fuels mixed with the scent of freshly exposed earth
concrete poured pads and hammers framing where
black oaks and boulders once bothered no one
and were home to many.

Just how much are we expected to endure
in the name of restoring
this Valley? Just what are we bringing back?
How many decibels, for how many years,
should be allowed
for diesel machinery, back-up beeping?
How much sewer gas and tour bus fumes
can one be expected to tolerate?
How many contractors in king cabs
must zoom importantly between
multiple job sites before we ask
if something might be wrong in our national park?

Some say that we must be patient
with the ugly
because in 10-20 years
we will all leave our cars and have a quiet place
perfectly hardened,
encased in cement and asphalt
for all to enjoy.

Theodore Roosevelt: Naturalist, Conservationist (1858-1919)

by Heather Anderson

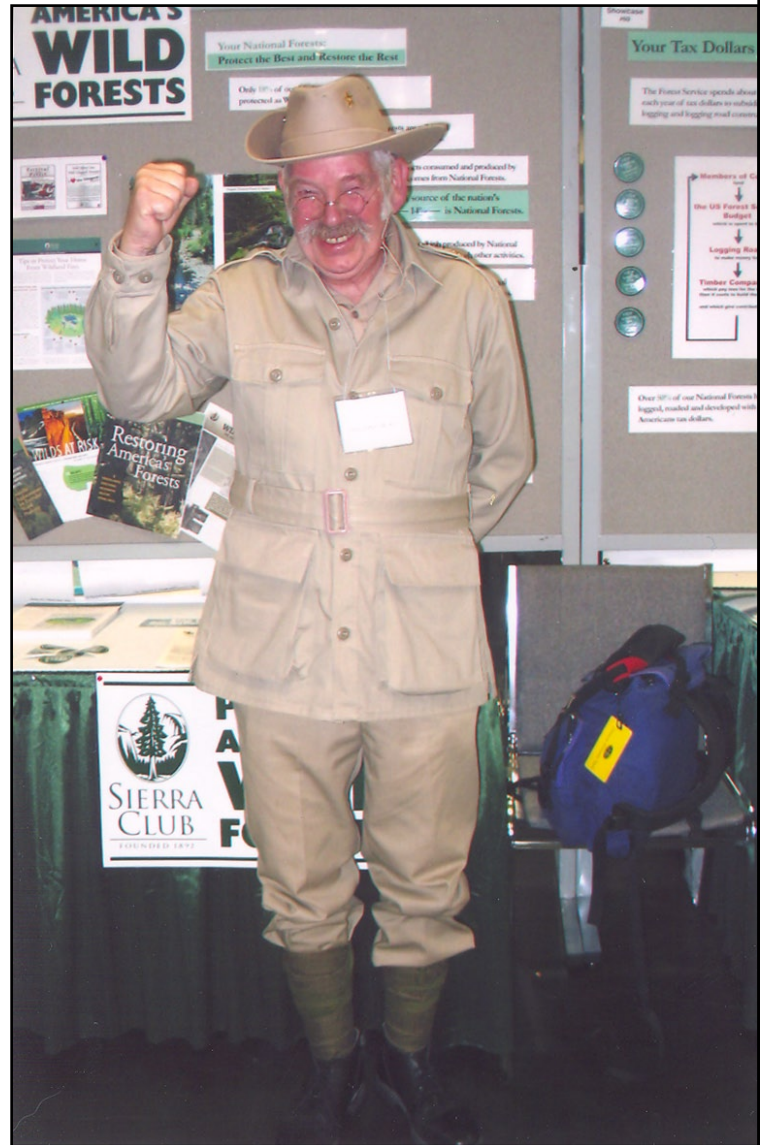
Teddy Roosevelt has always been one of my heroes. His intelligence, energy, enthusiasm, passion, and love of the natural world are qualities I admire. So when I met his alter-ego recently at the Sierra Club Summit in San Francisco, I had to stop and talk with him. (He was really a volunteer from the east who enjoyed representing Teddy's environmental views.)

I wonder if many of us know the extent of the heritage left to us by this president! He signed into permanent protection some of the most unique natural resources and habitat in the country, totaling some 230,000,000 acres or 84,000 acres per day. These included:

- 5 National Parks (doubling the National Parks to 10 by 1906)
- 150 National Forests
- 55 National Bird and Game Preserves
- 18 National Monuments
- 24 Reclamation Projects

In addition, Roosevelt set up seven Conservation Conferences and Commissions, like a Public Lands Commission and Inland Waterways Commission. He visited John Burroughs, the naturalist and author, and spent several days camping with John Muir and learning about vital conservation issues.

Teddy Roosevelt often read a book a day, wrote several books himself, wrote over 150,000 letters, and I heard he could quote from a book he had read five years earlier. Energetic himself, he raised a family of six rambunctious children. An authority on large American mammals, he led two major scientific expeditions for American museums. Before becoming president, he was governor of New York, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Colonel of the Rough Rid-



ers, and vice-president. As a crowning achievement, he was awarded of the Nobel Peace Prize. But his greatest contribution remains his work for conservation. Like Muir, he died having lived a “bully” life. ❧

Yosemite, from page 1

would not choose to live at the southwestern edge of Curry Village, as it is within an obviously active rockfall zone, and is shadowed by Glacier Point for a frosty six months a year. My husband works for the park concession. He heard falling rock that October afternoon and ran from his office at Curry Village and out away from the cliff base—a survival technique that those of us who live in Yosemite long term adopt by observing the natural

world around us . . . including the granite that has a habit of falling without warning.

NPS managers have put an inappropriately positive spin on this recent rockslide, a natural and hazardous event. This situation appears to be intentionally downplayed, especially as construction of employee dormitories continues, business as usual, post rockfall. We all need to pay attention

to common sense and science. These dated and unwise plans need to be re-evaluated. The NPS must stop misleading the public regarding their management goals. Poor decisions are driving the Yosemite Valley Plan, justifying projects which actually expand the development footprint while placing low level employees to sleep in a potentially deadly rockfall zone. ❧

ECOVIEW

by Marian Orvis

Holidays...Coming Up!

Doesn't seem possible, does it?

Feel like bringing more joy and less stuff to the holiday season in your community? There's time to organize an alternative gift fair! Gift fairs are the ultimate way to bring community together to support local, national, and international nonprofits. Alternative "shoppers" buy gifts in the form of charitable donations that support their recipients' values in tangible ways, whether it's a backpack of school supplies for children in Afghanistan or blankets and food for the local homeless shelter. Fairs range in size from a couple of groups at a coffee shop to dozens of organizations filling an auditorium. What they have in common is fun and spirit.

It's easy to infuse the holidays with goodwill. Find more info at www.newdream.org/holiday/altgift.php, including a detailed guide on how to organize a fair, materials to assist volunteers, and links to fairs around the country.



Did You Know...

that even when you turn off electrical appliances like computers, TVs, cable boxes, DVD players, and cell phone chargers, they still use energy? Or perhaps you simply forgot. Many of these items remain on "standby" mode "leaking" power—and wasting fossil fuels. According to UC at Berkeley, consumers can save between 6 and 26 percent on their power bills by reducing leakage. Just plug appliances into power strips and turn the power strips

off when you are done using them. Or simply unplug cords from the socket!



Smelly Science

Eight pregnant Holstein cows are being kept in a "bio-bubble" at UC Davis to determine how much gas a cow emits.

It's a question in the Central Valley, which has millions of cows and some of the most polluted air in the country. Preliminary results show that it is the ruminating process, rather than flatulence, which produces the most emissions of volatile compounds, which contribute to smog.



Equality

Just 1% of the American people own half of all the country's private wealth. Put another way, about three million people have half the wealth generated by a population of about 300 million people.

Research also shows that risk for a wide variety of diseases—from diabetes and arthritis to infant mortality and some kinds of cancer—decreases the higher up you are on the financial ladder. (No kidding!)



Remember Chernobyl

Just in time for the new pro-nuclear push promoted by passage of the hog-

trough U.S. energy bill comes a report that contamination from Chernobyl is actually getting worse.

Nearly 20 years after the nuclear plant in what is now Belarus belched radioactivity around Europe, studies show that the area polluted by dangerous alpha radiation has tripled!

Other discoveries that have led to revised estimates of the post-Chernobyl danger include confirmation that iodine-131 from the nuclear accident triggered as much as a 90-fold increase in thyroid cancers in children.



Hit the Road

British scientists have discovered how carrier pigeons find their way home: they follow the roads just like humans do.

Researchers at Oxford U. who spent 10 years studying the pigeons found that they fly along highways, turn at junctions and even use roundabouts. So much for following the stars.



Thought for the Month:

How old would you be if you didn't know your age?



I miss you guys; come back next month, y'all hear? 🌸

Outings Schedule

December 17th - Saturday

Day Hike (1B)
Lewis Fork of the Fresno River
(Lewis Creek)
Don Redmond (559) 268-1537

December 18th - Sunday

Day hike (1A) and visit John Muir National Historic Park in Martinez. Our visit begins with a 20 minute film about John Muir, then a tour of the house and grounds. We will

hike a 2 mile trail up Mt. Wanda (named for one of Muir's daughters.) Bring a picnic lunch and \$3 entrance fee. Limited to 16. We will carpool from Modesto Park 'n' Ride, 7:30 A.M.

*Yokuts leader Sandy Wilson
(209) 577-5616*



Built by Sierra Club members in 1934, this rustic, hostel-style lodge stands atop historic Donner Pass, just an hour and a half from Sacramento. Expect convenient access to all mountain activities, excellent family style meals, a friendly staff and a casual atmosphere.

FEATURED PROGRAMS

DECEMBER 31 New Year's Eve Party A wonderful and festive tradition at Clair Tappaan.

JANUARY 6-8, FEBRUARY 10-12, MARCH 24-26 Bay Area Ski Bus Trips Ride in comfort from Oakland to Clair Tappaan. Price: \$175 members, \$200 non-members, \$140 children (includes lodging/meals).

JANUARY 6-8, MARCH 10-12 Kids Ski Weekends Start kids off right with lessons and short trips on CTL trails. Price: \$125/child (includes equipment rental/lodging/meals).

FEBRUARY 3-5 Snow Camping Skills Course Price: \$145 members, \$170 non-members.

FEBRUARY 17-19, MARCH 24-26 Snowshoe Ecology Tours Enjoy guided snowshoe day tours and broaden your knowledge of alpine ecology. Price: \$145 members, \$170 non-members (includes lodging/meals).

MARCH 17-19 Snow Camping Trip Price: \$145 members, \$170 non-members.



For more information about these programs or to receive a full schedule and description of Clair Tappaan programs please visit our website at www.ctl.sierraclub.org or call (800) 679-6775.

Trip Ratings

Distance	Elevation Gain
1) up to 6 miles	A) under 1,000 feet
2) 6 to 10 miles	B) 1,000 to 2,000 feet
3) 10 to 15 miles	C) 2,000 to 3,000 feet
4) 15 to 20 miles	D) 3,000 to 4,000 feet
5) over 20 miles	E) over 4,000 feet

Our Tehipite Chapter Outings Chair is Richard Sloan (559) 696-2971 RiverRich1509@aol.com. Please contact him with any questions concerning our outings program. Contact the trip leader directly if you are interested in one of the listed trips.

Tehipite Chapter outings are free and open to the public. All leaders are unpaid volunteers assuming responsibility for a good trip, and your cooperation is mandatory. Please review additional trip and participant requirements at www.tehipite.sierraclub.org/outings.

Would you like to be an Outings Leader?

Do you have a favorite hike you would like to share with fellow outdoor lovers? Being an Outings Leader can be very rewarding. Basic qualifications include a desire to lead outings, basic first aid or the ability to devote a day to getting qualified in first aid, and reading the Sierra Club Outings Leader Handbook. The Tehipite Chapter would like to offer outings to people of all abilities and ages. If you are interested, email Richard Sloan at RiverRich1509@aol.com or phone (559) 696-2971. Richard will organize a dinner for interested members. Current Outings Leaders please contact Richard with your proposed hikes.



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Did you know that *Tehipite Topics* is available online, approximately one week before you receive it in the mail? *In color!*

See www.tehipite.sierraclub.org.

January *Tehipite Topics* deadline December 9th.



Mountains and morning mist from Delilah Lookout
November 13th trail run. Rasmussen photo.