

Tehipite Topics

October 2011 ♣ Vol. 57, No. 8

www.tehipite.sierraclub.org

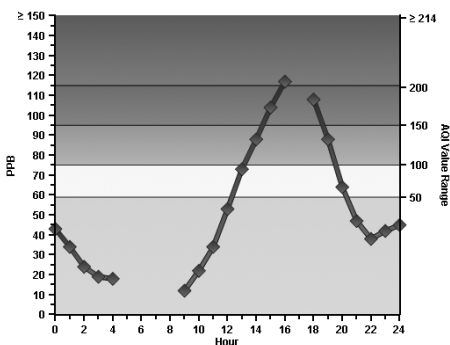
Clearing the Air

By Kevin Hall

The No Spin O-Zone

Readers of The Fresno Bee were greeted to an amazing front-page headline a few weeks back, one that must have had many thinking they'd awakened in a parallel universe. You know, that mythical place where the progressive policies of the San Joaquin Valley have led to effective pollution control resulting in clean air. Because blazoned across the top of the Sept. 1 edition were the words, "Valley avoids August ozone offenses."

My first thought was, "Man, I hate being right sometimes." Last month I had predicted the valley air district would be using its removal of the Arvin air pollution monitor to paint a false picture of progress at reducing the lung-scarring, brain-damaging, heart-stopping gases and chunks of crud in our air, but the speed at which they did so was stunning. And if the weather stays relatively mild throughout September, there will be a repeat of the big lie come Oct. 1.



The Fresno-Drummond station mysteriously shut down for a crucial hour on Sept. 6, 2011.

At issue is the one-hour ozone standard. This is the measurement that reflects the highest ozone level in a single hour. The valley air district was crowing loudly about the "fact" that they had recorded

See "Air" page 4

TOPICS GOING QUARTERLY

Starting with the January, 2012 issue, Tehipite Topics will be issued quarterly, in January, April, July, and October. Times are tough, and the newsletter is by far our biggest expense. We need to sayve money. We also want to save some trees and reduce our carbon footprint a bit.

In some ways the Topics will improve. Issues will have more content, and we are thinking of offering color photos and a glossier product.

We know that many of our subscribers are online, and they can get frequent updates on outings, environmental issues, and the outdoors at our web site, tehipite.sierraclub.org.

We would like to hear what you think of all this. Please send us your comments to wattsvalleypreservation@gmail.com. or via the Postal Service to PO Box 5396, Fresno CA 93755-5396

Tehipite Contributes to Climate Ride California 2011

At our August ExCom meeting Tehipite Chapter approved a motion to contribute \$500 to Tom Cotter's participation in the Climate Ride California, October 2-7. Tom is the Central Valley sales manager for Real Goods Solar, and the Climate Ride is a five-day bicycle race from Eureka to San Francisco to promote bicycling and sustainable living.

"Climate Ride California is a gorgeous cycling adventure that begins in California's historic Redwood Empire near Eureka, travels along the scenic coast and ventures into the famed Russian River Valley before crossing the Golden Gate Bridge into San Francisco. Climate Ride California is more than a bike trip – it's an inspiring journey with like-minded people who are united by their pas-

Willow Creek Collaborative

Elissa Brown of the Willow Creek Collaborative Project contacted Tehipite Chapter in June. Several of our activists met with her and learned about this project. The Willow Creek Project is part of the Sustainable Forests and Communities Collaborative, under the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, an agency of the California State Government. There are other projects besides Willow Creek, and all have the following objectives:

- Fuel reduction and forest restoration
- Local economic and environmental sustainability
- Enhancements to the watershed to protect local users and benefit downstream users
- Protection of cultural, historical and archaeological resources
- Promoting environmental stewardship and awareness
- Renewable energy production
- Ongoing environmental assessment, monitoring and outreach
- Promoting projects that support healthy community wild fire and urban interface
- Build capacity to plan, fund & implement projects

The Willow Creek watershed is located in the Sierra north of Bass Lake. The Willow Creek Collaborative had its first stakeholders' meeting On September 9th at the North Fork office of the U.S. forest Service. It will be a six month process. If you are interested in participating or would like to learn more, visit the following web address:

<http://sites.google.com/site/sustainable-sierragroup2/potential-projects/willow-creek-project>

Chapter Meetings

General Meeting

October 19th at 7 p.m.

UC Center, 550 E. Shaw Ave., Fresno



Don't Miss This Film!!!

For our October Program we will be screening the critically acclaimed film **Gasland**. In this Oscar-nominated documentary, director Josh Fox journeys across America to examine the nega-

tive effects of natural-gas drilling, from poisoned water sources to kitchen sinks that burst into flame to unhealthy animals and people. Is natural gas a viable alternative to the country's dwindling energy resources, or do the potential harmful consequences outweigh the positives? Fox's film raises these and many more probing questions.

Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings October 12th

The Conservation Committee meets at 7 PM

The Executive Committee meets at 8 PM

**University of California Center
550 E. Shaw Ave., Fresno**



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Merced Group

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Merced Group

Conservation and Executive Committee Meetings
(the first Thursday of each month)

Next meeting is Thursday, Oct. 6th, 7:00 P.M. Rod Webster's home, 345 E. 20th St., Merced. Conservation meeting is first and can last 30-40 minutes. Anyone with an interest in local, state, or national conservation issues is welcome to attend.

Merced Group General Meetings

The third Thursday of each month (except Dec. and May) Starts at 7:00, usually over by 8:30 or so.

This month: Thursday, October 20th

Program: "Issues Regarding the Merced River"

Speakers: Ralph Mendershausen and Jeff Gabe of the Merced Canyon Committee

During the past couple of years protection, and management issues about the Merced River have been a focus in our region. They will continue to be so in the year ahead.

Of wide reaching impact is the dam relicensing process currently underway. It is overseen by FERC (the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) and creates conditions for Exchequer and McSwain dams and the sections of the Merced River impacted by them. Under contention by MID (the Merced Irrigation District) is whether the sections of the Merced River below the dams need to be addressed even though

they were in the past. Encompassed in the relicensing are such topics as land use, recreation, water supply, habitat, threatened and endangered species, and historical and cultural values. As you can see the conditions of the new license will be wide reaching. Gravity is added by the fact that the conditions of the relicensing will be in effect for the next 30-50 years!

Our speakers will also address details in the recreational component of the relicensing. There is potential for improving opportunities on and around the lakes but also in the river corridor. Of special interest is further development of the trail system running along the river from Lake McClure up to Bagby. This would be an important leg in eventually perhaps creating a continuous bicycle/hiking trail connecting the town of Merced with the park.

Foremost on the near horizon is MID's desire to raise the water level behind Exchequer dam. This would inundate a lower portion of the Merced River which was designated Wild and Scenic in 1992. Current law would prohibit this but Sen. Jeff Denham's proposed bill HR 2578 would allow it. This is unprecedented and could have nationwide ramifications. Our speakers have a thorough knowledge of the details of this bill and the politicking going on behind the scenes.

So join us- so that in the months ahead as these issues become more prominent you will be up to speed.

Location : United Methodist Church, 899 Yosemite Parkway, Merced. We meet in the Fireside room, accessed from the parking lot on Cypress Ave. Park on the end near Yosemite Parkway. There will be signs.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



Bear in mind the consequences.

The Yellowstone grizzly bear is an irreplaceable part of America's natural heritage, a symbol of the independence that defines the American character and an icon of all that is wild and free. The Bush administration set forth a proposal that would remove federal protection for the Yellowstone grizzly bear. Help Sierra Club protect our forest friends; they prefer the woods than being on display.

Get grizzly and JOIN Sierra Club.

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Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

Contributions, gifts and dues to 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 for your Chapter newsletters.

Enclose a check and mail to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968 or visit our website www.sierraclub.org

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Protect the Wild and Scenic Merced River

Rod Webster

Recent bills introduced in Congress by Representative Jeff Denham (R) would remove the portion of the Merced River shown on this page from protection under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. HR 869/2578 would allow the pictured portion of the river to be flooded during prime rafting and hiking season.

The Merced River is a National Wild and Scenic River until it reaches the level of 867 feet above sea level. That is also the maximum legal and physical upper limit of Lake McClure. When that reservoir is full 24 miles of river downstream of the designated and protected river are under Merced Irrigation District's reservoirs. Above the legally established level of 867' the river is protected from dams and reservoirs all the way to Yosemite Valley. Now Merced Irrigation District (MID) is trying to grab about ten vertical feet of reservoir space through HR 869/2578. The primary effect of these bills will be to roll back protection for more than half a mile of National Wild and Scenic Merced River. Such a de-designation of a Wild and Scenic River segment has never been done before! The small economic gains promised in support of the bills are outweighed by economic losses in Mariposa County and the general damage to the Merced River and all National Wild and Scenic Rivers protected since the late 1960's.

HR 869/2578 may bring marginal and occasional additional water to MID reservoirs, but there is no guarantee that additional water (maybe an average of 10,000 acre feet per year --- 2% of the District's typical diversions) will go to Merced County farms. The additional water may go to senior water rights holders well outside the District. Many other questions are raised by this proposal, but MID claims they will be resolved as the district goes through its re-licensing process with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). However, FERC is not the place to expect fair judgments about endangered species, dam safety, destruction of recreational sites, and other issues raised by HR 869/2578. MID has good reason to expect that FERC, which licenses dams and is notoriously inattentive to other values than energy production, will give them plenty of slack. Indeed, FERC has already done so! HR 869/2578 is only necessary

because raising the maximum pool on Lake McClure is currently illegal. Even FERC cannot overlook that.

Since 1991 we have had a good balance between conservation and recreation upstream of 867' and agriculture and power production downstream. HR 869/2578 violate the present balance; more importantly they violate the essence of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act by removing a beautiful stretch of "Wild" river for inclusion within a reservoir. They set a terrible precedent.



Merced River in Mariposa County

"Air" from page 1 no violations of the one-hour standard for the entire month of August. Furthermore, they were taking credit for their "air alert" system aimed at getting people to voluntarily drive less as having made all the difference.

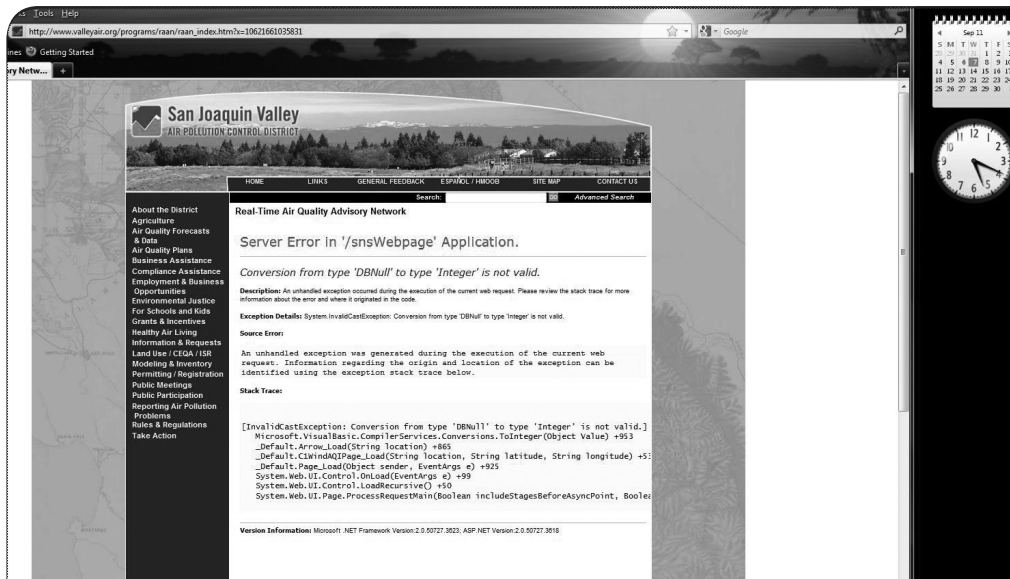
Wow. If mendacity were a slip, I'd say theirs is showing.

Setting aside the Arvin monitor, August's unusual winds and low temperatures, and the delayed almond harvest, consider that the one-hour standard was supposed to have been reached 12 years ago, and not just for a month but the entire year. 1999 should have been the first of three years in a row without any violations.

The current standard for ozone is the eight-hour measurement. Although still too high, this level more accurately reflects the levels at which human health is directly harmed. In the month of August, the standard was exceeded on 29 out of 31 days with 152 monitors having recorded violations in the San Joaquin Valley.

It was the worst August in five years, but you won't see that press release coming from the air board any time soon.

To the contrary, the valley air district's public information office has been turned into a public relations machine bordering on propaganda mill, and The Bee headline demon-



This screenshot of an error reading from the valley air district on Sept. 7, 2011 shows when the system went offline.

strates how effective they've become at misleading the media and public: 152 violations and the headline reads zero. Press releases warn of financial sanctions, not of threats to your child's life or her grandfather's heart.

Monitoring Monitors

So dedicated are they to perpetuating the myth, it has to raise one's suspicions when air monitors seemingly on the verge of a violation suddenly shut off. Just a few days after the celebratory headlines and news reports (and there were plenty around the valley), ozone levels started to spike again, particularly in southeast Fresno. On Tuesday, Sept.

6, the Fresno-Drummond station was rocketing upward when at 4 pm it just stopped working for an entire hour; violation averted. The following day it was again spiking at an even faster pace. Concerned breathers were checking in online every hour when suddenly the air district's website simply stopped working a little after 5 p.m. and instead posted an error message for the southeast Fresno and Clovis monitors. They came back online after about 30 minutes and, wait for it, the one-hour ozone reading peaked at 124 parts per billion – one part per billion below the violation level of 125.

Meanwhile, a short distance away the Roosevelt High football team was outside, practicing in full gear, running hard and breathing deeply. A few miles up north in Clovis, boys' peewee football and girls' soccer were also running at full steam. No problem here, folks. My air district just told me the air was clean. I read it in the paper. I saw it on the news.

The lucky few were listening to independent media. The one news source that told the story completely was KFCF/KPFA. Through the valley stringer project, Vic Bedoian delivered a thorough report on the Pacifica Evening News (check it out online by going to the 25:38 minute mark at <http://www.kpfa.org/archive/id/72985>).

Et tu, Obama?

This column can't end without a quick comment on President Obama's decision to delay implementation of a new ozone standard by at least a year. An esti

See "Air" page 6

Great San Joaquin River Clean-up

Please contact Richard Sloan at 559-696-2971, riverrich1509@aol.com, Steve Starcher, 559-289-8874, sastarcher@gmail.com or Steve Haze, 559-970-6320 re opportunities to help clean up the San Joaquin River.

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

Reserve early for 2011 !!

September 9-11 and October 17-19

Explore the wild, windswept islands of Channel Island National Park. Enjoy the frolicking seals and sea lions. Train your binoculars on unusual sea and land birds. Hike the trails to find blankets of wildflowers and plants found in no other place on earth. Kayak or snorkel the pristine waters--- or just relax at sea. These live-aboard, eco tours depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68' twin diesel Truth. Fee (\$785 for July trips; \$590 for September and October) includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, beverages, plus the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to lead hikes, call attention to items of interest and present evening programs.

To make a reservation mail a \$100 check, payable to Sierra Club to leader: Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732.

Contact leader for more information (626-443-0706; jholtzhl@aol.com)



CALLING A BOOK!

PLEASE COME HOME. I MISS YOU TERRIBLY; YOU WERE SUCH A GOOD FRIEND.

LOVE, HEATHER

(The book, *Wilderness Forever*: Howard Zahniser and the Path to the Wilderness Act of 1964 by Mark Harvey was borrowed from Heather Anderson and she would greatly appreciate its return. 681-6304 or heather.anderson8@comcast.net or bring it to a meeting.)

“Air” from page 5 mated 3,000 lives will be lost every year the standard is pushed back.

That pales in comparison to the Tar Sands Oil Pipeline issue. When Dr. James Hansen of the NASA Goddard Institute describes the possible outcome of allowing that project to move forward as “game over for the climate,” only a fool would fail to listen. The President has the authority to single-handedly stop the project. There is no negotiation required with the free marketeers of doom. Take action by going here: <http://act.350.org/sign/tar-sands/>.

(Kevin Hall is director of the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition based in Fresno and online at www.calcleanair.org and on Facebook. He can be reached at kevin@calcleanair.org.)

“Climate Ride” from page 1

sion for sustainability, renewable energy, and bicycles—the ultimate carbon-free form of transportation.” You can learn more about Climate Ride California at <http://www.climate-ride.org/rides/california/>.

Tehipite and Tom Cotter have agreed to promote sustainable living and solar technology through a partnership. Tom will promote Tehipite Chapter—in fact he is planning to wear a Tehipite Chapter jersey on one day of the ride—and Tehipite Chapter will promote Real Goods Solar. This arrangement benefits our chapter because Real Goods will be donating \$500 to the Tehipite Chapter for each home or business that upgrades to solar! (See the Real Goods ad in this edition of the Topics.) Please be sure to tell Real Goods you were referred by Tehipite Chapter. It’s a win-win-win! Fight global warming, make your utility electricity bill disappear, and strengthen Tehipite Chapter all at the same time!

Real Goods can help you discover just how affordable and freeing solar power really is. They can design systems for families on just about any budget, and use all available rebates and incentives. In fact, if you choose to go solar through their PowerSavings Plan (where you buy the power you use instead of the system that generates it), you may not have any upfront costs at all. A typical homeowner can now add solar to their home for no money down and pay less monthly than their current electric bill. Those who wish

to purchase a system will enjoy enough savings on electricity to pay for the system in a matter of years (typically 5-8 years), and free electricity for decades after that. With either option, they are experts at making solar power affordable.

Tehipite is particularly proud of our arrangement with Real Goods because it is a really great company, started by John Schaeffer. According to Wikipedia, “In 1977, 29 year-old John Schaeffer lived on an off-grid commune in Mendocino County, California, and commuted 35 miles (56 km) to work each day as a computer operator. Since he drove into town, he became the designated person to pick up supplies for the commune. Frugal by nature, Schaeffer found himself driving all over Mendocino County to buy needed tools and equipment at the best prices. After an especially frustrating shopping trip, Schaeffer thought how great it would be if there was one ‘general’ store that sold all the ‘real goods’ for off-grid living at fair prices. Within a year, Real Goods was born. In 1978, Schaeffer took \$3,000 in savings and a \$5,000 loan from his father and opened the first Real Goods store in Willits, California.”

Real Goods has come a huge distance in 33 years. According to Berman and O’Connor in *Who Owns the Sun?* “In 1996, Schaeffer inaugurated the Real Goods Solar Living Center in Hopland, California, as a kind of solar theme park, designed and built in close collaboration with architect Sim Van der Ryn and David Arkin of the Ecological Design Institute, and incorporating innovative energy-generating and energy-efficient components as well as integral demonstrations of new approaches to ecological construction and landscaping.”

Real Goods is now one of the largest solar installers in the United States, having installed over 11,500 solar electric systems for both residential and commercial properties. “Real Goods’ vision is to lower humankind’s ecological footprint on Earth, thereby contributing to a healthier future for people and the planet. Their mission is to realize its vision through providing the best in earth-friendly products, sustainable living education and leading-edge renewable energy solutions” (Wikipedia). Real Goods made Inc. magazine’s list of the Top 500 fastest growing companies and has been covered in *Time*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Fortune*. And to think it all started in an off-grid commune!

You can learn more about Real Good Solar by reading John Schaeffer’s *A Place in the Sun* and by going to <http://www.realgoods.com/>.

How to See Nature and Wilderness

In the January 2011 edition, Heather Anderson says, “When I teach art and awareness at the [San Joaquin River] and ask students what is the importance of our river, they are quick to mention clean water, habitat, intact ecosystem, recreation, wildlife and plants, but never beauty.”

This is interesting, and I have to ask why beauty is not the first thing that springs to mind when students are asked about the importance of a natural feature, whatever it might be—mountain, meadow, tree, or river. The response piques my curiosity because beauty IS my first response when I am in natural surroundings. Beauty, after all, is why I’m there. So why is my response so different from Heather’s students?

I believe all these students really do appreciate the beauty of nature. However, the ability to articulate a response is just down there deep below the surface, and these students need Heather’s nurturing to help them get down to their natural connection with natural beauty in order to be able to express it. I believe we humans are “hard-wired” to appreciate natural beauty because our ancestors lived in natural surroundings for millions of years. The capacity to appreciate natural beauty is innate, but it has been buried under layers of modern culture. We have been taught to atomize nature into its many components—endangered species and natural resources so that it is very difficult for us to see nature immediately and holistically.

I have even heard environmentalists opine that beauty is the last consideration when planning how to fight climate change. I strongly disagree.

I was lucky enough to have an artist for my mother and a hiker-photographer-biology teacher for my father. Mom taught me how to draw and paint, and many of my early subjects were the surroundings of my boyhood in the Sierra Nevada. Dad took us hiking as a family on day hikes before I was ten and later into the High Sierra with his hiking partner since the 1940s, Dick Moller. Dad took many photos on these trips. We three kids always looked forward to the slide shows of Dad and Dick’s most recent trips, which inspired us to want to go along, as we all started to do in our early

See “Seeing Nature” page 7

Outings Schedule

Outing 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 Marcia Rasmussen, Marcia@BigBaldy.com, 559-332-2419. Please contact Marcia 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.

Outings Leaders may post their own trips on the web page or send them to Marcia@BigBaldy.com.

CST #2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California. California has established a Travel Consumer Restitution Fund (TCRF) under the California Seller of Travel Act. The TCRF is not applicable to these Outings. The law requires us to advise you that you would not be eligible to make any claim from the TCRF in the unlikely event of default by the Sierra Club. California law also requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. The Sierra Club has such a trust account.

Required Liability Waiver

All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the Liability Waiver before you choose to participate on an outing, please go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/>, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

October 8, 2011 Saturday

Day Hike (1A)

Bear Lake, Emigrant Wilderness (Yokuts)

This is approximately a six mile hike, beginning at Crabtree at elevations of about 7,200-7,700ft with a moderate uphill on the way in. Swimming is an option, if warm enough. Bring lunch, ten essentials, and money for dinner at Mi Pueblo in Sonora on the way home. Meet at Denny's parking lot in Oakdale at 8:00 a.m. Contact Monica Casey at hikerlady1955@gmail.com, or co-leader, Alan Bernikoff at abernikoff@gmail.com.

Sunday, October 9, 2011

Day Hike Leader: Karen Hammer Difficult Maximum Elevation: 9,100 feet Distance: 9.40 miles Elevation Gain: 1,500 feet

Fall colors hike to see the quaking aspens. If we are lucky the mountains may have a light dusting of snow. Rain will cancel. This is a long and rigorous hike starting at over 8,000 ft. in elevation. Trailhead is at Badger Flat along Kaiser Pass Rd. Bring a minimum of 2 quarts of water, rain gear, layers of clothing for cold weather, hiking boots, high energy snacks and lunch. Contact: Karen Hammer 559-298-5272 Call to find out meeting place and time and to confirm that you have the necessary conditioning requirements and essential gear for this day hike.

Saturday, October 29, 2011 - 7:30am

Day Hike Leader: Randall Brown Rating: Intermediate

We will hike the Big Oak Flat "Ghost Road" in Yosemite Valley. Meet at parking area behind Fruityard (Geer Rd. & Hwy. 132) at 7:30 am. Sign up with leader Randall Brown. Contact: Randall Brown (209) 632-5994

Would you like to be an Outings Leader?

Being an Outings Leader can be very rewarding. Basic qualifications include a desire to lead outings, basic first aid or the ability to devote time 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, phone Marcia Rasmussen (559) 332-2419 or email her at Marcia@bigbaldy.com

"Seeing Nature" from page 6

teens. I still remember vividly my first trip with Dad and Dick out of the Granite Creek trailhead in 1963. I had a little altitude sickness at our first camp at Sadler Lake, but the warming whisky Dad poured into my trail cup cured that soon enough.

Our parents had lots of books around and encouraged us kids to read. Since I was interested in backpacking and the Sierra Nevada, I read quite a lot about the Sierra. I also believe

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that reading shaped my appreciation of my natural surroundings as well as my ability to articulate it.

Some have suggested that language weakens our experience of nature. For example, In *Running on Emptiness* modern primitivist John Zerzan argues that language—symbolic thought—comes between us and our experience of reality: "We seem to have experienced a fall into representation, whose depths and consequences are only now being fully plumbed. In a fundamental sort of falsification, symbols at first mediated reality and then replaced it. At present we live within symbols to a greater degree than we do within our bodily selves or directly with each other."

While I agree with Zerzan on nearly everything in regards to re-evaluating primitive societies and learning from them so that moderns can live more fulfilling, healthier lives, I do not agree that language itself is a problem. Of course language can be used to further and further separate us from nature by increasingly isolating in a technological and technocratic "reality." But this is a re-

sult of how we choose to use language and symbols, not a result of language itself.

Shakespeare provides guidance on how language helps us appreciate nature in the words of the character Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth
 to heaven;
 And as imagination bodies forth
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
 Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
 A local habitation and a name.

"How to Experience Nature" might have been a better title. Different people, of course, have different ways of experiencing reality, nature. I think it must involve all the senses, not just sight. Theseus's frenzied approach may work for some. For me, a quiet way works best. Yesterday, for example, I chose the mid afternoon in Watts Valley to sit and look to the High Sierra, across the flat, filled with dry grass, soft chess, wild oats, maiden clover, tarweed, and lupine; over the line of oaks, sycamores, and cottonwoods marking an intermittent stream beyond; and on to Bransford Mountain, a few miles distant. It is dry and warm, not uncomfortable for a late summer day, with autumn coming on, the first dry leaves scat-

tering in the warm breeze. After a time the mind settles down, all its "important issues" losing themselves in the infinite indifference of the universe; the fictional "self" known as Chip Ashley sorts itself out among the sounds of millions of insects, the ubiquitous laugh of the acorn woodpecker, the scolding of a scrub jay, the skittering of a California Towhee in the dry leaves—and yes, the rumbling of dual-trailer gravel trucks along Watts Valley Road. Quail fly stealthily one by one to avoid a Cooper's hawk from the top of a live oak to the gravely dry stream bed. The air is scented with tarweed and blue curl. Insects buzz among the heart-shaped leaves of the Catalpa. A dragonfly sits perfectly still on a rusty barb on the fence wire, transparent wings tipped with specks of black. The rush from air brakes of the school bus dropping off my daughter snaps me back to "reality."

