

Tehipite Topics

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Trip 16296A: Notes from a Sierra Club Outing Devils Postpile to Tuolumne Meadows — August 5-16, 2016 —

Story and photos by Dan Comelli

My wife, Mary, and I signed up for this popular Sierra Club Outings offering nine months in advance, as soon as the trip was posted. We knew these treks fill up quickly, as this would be the third trip of this kind for us. Participants are accompanied by a pack team with stock animals that carry all the heavy things needed for 12 days in the wilderness, allowing us to carry a relatively light daypack during the hikes and the moves from one camp to another. There were ten participants plus a leader and an assistant leader, all Sierra Club members from throughout the

country eager to experience the Sierra Nevada high country wilderness and do some serious trekking. We would cover some 70 miles of trails, most on the John Muir Trail, gaining and losing 15,000 feet of elevation, all over a fantastic 12 days.

Getting to the meeting place

Our rendezvous point was in scenic Rock Creek Canyon on the eastern Sierra at the packers corral. At a 9,400-foot elevation, this meeting place would serve as our camp for the first two nights, allowing our bodies to adapt to altitude, an important safety precaution since most of us live at or near sea level. Others arrived mostly in large groups, having carpooled from various locations. Most of us were at or approaching retirement age. The trekkers briefly greeted each other, unpacked, and set up tents. After a great dinner, prepared by our packer-provided cook, we had a more formal meet-and-greet session and the first of our nightly

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see also:

Book Review: Deadbeat Dams

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Sacrifice of a Natural Wonder: The Sierra Club and Glen Canyon

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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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Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



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Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts.



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Chapter Secretary: Brenda Markham
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Upcoming Tehipite Chapter Meetings

Tehipite Chapter Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

Second Wednesday of each month ~ members welcome

February 8, March 8, April 12, May 10, June 14, July 12, August 9, September 13, October 11, November 8, December 13, and January 10

The Conservation Committee meets at 7 PM. The Executive Committee meets at 8 PM.

University of California Center, 550 E. Shaw Avenue, Fresno (between First and Fresno Streets)

Tehipite Chapter General Meetings

Third Wednesday of each month from 7 to 9 PM, except for July, August, and—again this year—December

OUR GENERAL MEETINGS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, AND PARKING IS FREE.

University of California Center, 550 E. Shaw Avenue, Fresno (between First and Fresno Street)



Wednesday, February 15, 7:00 PM — “What’s Up with Water,” with David Cehrs

Come and join Dr. David Cehrs in a lecture/discussion on water in California. Topics will include: local and statewide water issues; how water affects our everyday lives through its influence on our quality of life, lifestyles, personal and societal economics, and societal stability. We will discuss what we use water for, how much we use, and how much water is available to us—or not—now and in the future. Also woven into the discussion will be climate change, drought, floods, dams, agriculture, population growth, sustainability, finite resources, water law and more. David Cehrs has been working with water and water related issues, locally and statewide, since 1973. He is the current board president of the Kings River Conservation District and is on the Sierra Club California water committee.



Saturday, March 25, 5:00 PM, at The Big Red Church, 2131 N. Van Ness Avenue, Fresno — Our Annual Potluck Banquet — “Measuring Glacial Movement in Yosemite, from John Muir to today,” with Yosemite Park Geologist Greg Stock

Scientists have explored and studied Lyell and Maclure Glaciers for nearly 150 years. John Muir and other early scientists such as Joseph LeConte and François Matthes mapped the glaciers’ extent, measured their movement, and observed changes in the ice through time. Park naturalists and scientists have continued to regularly survey these glaciers, carrying on this legacy of science in Yosemite.



Wednesday, April 19, 7:00 PM — Celebration for John Muir’s Birthday — program to be announced

Our April program will be in celebration of John Muir, who was born on April 21, 1838 in Dunbar, Scotland. One possibility is a documentary of last year’s rededication of the John Muir Memorial Shelter, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The hut sits at the summit of Muir Pass, halfway along the length of the John Muir Trail in Kings Canyon National Park. NPS staff, with members of the Sierra Club, met there on August 25 to install a new plaque. Check our website in April to see what we have planned for this day.



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Merced Group Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

The first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM — at Rod Webster’s home, 345 E. 20th St., Merced.

The 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 Monthly Meetings at the Methodist Church

In the new year the Merced Group will resume its normal schedule of holding general meetings for members and the public on the third Thursday of each month. We will continue to meet at 7:00 PM at Merced United Methodist Church, 899 Yosemite Parkway (also known as Hwy 140 to Yosemite). As always, it is easiest to park in the lot on Cypress Avenue and enter there to reach the Fireside room.

Our program on February 16 will be Bill King sharing about his hike from “Mono Lake to UC Merced”.

Bill not only did a traditional trans-Sierra traverse, awesome in its own right, but he extended it at both ends, trekking clear from Owens Valley to the Central Valley. Primarily on trails but sometimes forced onto roadways, Bill backpacked 160 miles during his 20-day sojourn. His route ascended Bloody Canyon on the eastern slope, up over Mono Pass, along the length of the Merced River canyon, on out through Bear Valley in the foothills, and finally dropping down into Merced. With lots of great photo ops along the way, and I suspect some interesting stories from this solo excursion, you won’t want to miss this presentation.

Bill will have even more time to indulge his love of hiking, having just stepped down from his position as Merced City Planner. He intends to turn his passion for the outdoors into a new business venture. In the coming year, Bill will open a guide service for hikes into the Sierras. It will include backpacking excursions as well as tamer day hikes. Besides sharing his love of the mountains, Bill sees this as a way to cultivate appreciation and stewardship of the natural world. As a retired planner he also hopes some of the lessons gained from being out under the open skies translate into stewardship of our own home towns and cities.

Volunteer Opportunity in Yosemite National Park

The Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center (formerly known as LeConte Memorial Lodge) is a National Historic Landmark building that represents the rich heritage of the Sierra Club in Yosemite Valley. The building houses several interpretive displays, a children’s nature corner, a wonderful library, art projects, and evening programs.

Since 1904 a curator and Sierra Club volunteers have provided information to park visitors. Today the program welcomes over 15,000 visitors to the Sierra Club’s spiritual home in Yosemite Valley, and volunteers are needed now as the building reopens for its 113th season on Wednesday, May 3, 2017.

Volunteers spend a week in the park assisting the club’s curator, Bonnie Gisel, PhD, by interacting with park visitors and carrying on the Sierra Club tradition of helping others

appreciate and protect our natural environment. Volunteers get free park admission and free camping in a group campsite during their service week.

Potential volunteers must:

- Be outgoing and comfortable interacting with park visitors
- Have visited Yosemite within the last two years and have current park knowledge
- Be familiar with current Sierra Club programs and initiatives
- Be able to stand for up to 3 hours per day
- Tent camp only
- Bring their food and supplies
- Not bring children, pets or guests

To become a volunteer for the 2017 season, please contact Bonnie Gisel at 209-347-7300.

Merced Group News

December Awards “Banquet”

I think all would agree that this year’s potluck awards dinner could indeed qualify as a “banquet”. The dishes were varied both in ingredients and ethnicity, and choices for the omnivore, vegetarian, and vegan were plentiful. Lots of home cooking was represented at the table—this was no “Costco catered” affair. The conversation around the tables was equally eclectic. We all had lots of opportunities to make new acquaintances, as well as catch up with old friends.

Our presenter, Bob Turner (the editor of this publication among his many contributions to the Tehipite Chapter), gave us an inspiring tour of his two decades of travels throughout the wildlands of the American West. Literally sometimes spending months at a time out on the road and on the trails, he tasked himself with visiting as many national parks and other sites of natural beauty as he could. Sometimes soloing, sometimes linking up with mountaineering buddies, he sought out the most impressive views and vistas. As you might guess these were often the highest points of land in a region. Some were accessible by 4-wheel drive vehicle, some by established trail, but many only by cross country treks. I think even the most traveled of the audience found Bob’s extensive explorations of our iconic western wild lands impressive and inspiring.

This year’s Banquet awardee—Candice Medefind

This year the Merced Group’s annual award could almost be termed a lifetime achievement award, but it can’t because Candice Medefind is still engaged and still contributing to her community in many ways. She is not the type of person who retires from serving, though she certainly has earned such a respite. To give you some perspective on this journey of hers, here are some highlights:

Fresh out of high school Candice was walking the picket lines with Cesar Chavez during the UFW’s grape boycott in the 60s.

In the 80s when a rocket fuel manufacturing plant threatened to plunk itself down in the middle of Merced County agricultural lands, Candice was one of the organizers who helped defeat the proposal. Later she helped consolidate a movement to protect the local family planning clinic. Her law degree from Boalt Hall at UC Berkeley found use in an interesting way. Candice became the executive director of CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates). This agency is charged with helping children receive support and representation in the legal system.

While a full time teacher at Merced College and later UC Merced, Candice still found time to head up a local recycling effort. In the early stages it took the form of a recycling center at her church. Later she was a key leader in the community coalition that got the city and county to finally adopt a full scale recycling program as part of normal refuse collection.

When winter housing for Merced’s homeless at the National Guard Armory had to close for periods of time, Candice was instrumental in opening her church to them. And when the Armory finally closed permanently to the indigent, the church, primarily under the efforts of Candice and her husband Mark, fed and housed the homeless on a permanent basis.

And finally, bringing you up-to-date, Candice is currently the Executive Director of Healthy House Within a MATCH Coalition, whose mission is to promote the well-being and health of all people in our multi-ethnic community through education, services, and advocacy. One very successful program that has been fostered by that program is the fusing of traditional Hmong medicine (shamans) with traditional Western health care providers. In fact, it has been so effective for Hmong patients that it has become a prototype for nationwide use.

And so, having heard this long list of remarkable contributions to community, I think you can agree that the Merced Executive Committee chose wisely in selecting Candice Medefin to honor this year.



CANDICE MEDEFIND, SIERRA CLUB HONOREE 2016

THE PLAQUE READS: “IN RECOGNITION OF MANY YEARS OF SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP, AND FOR YOUR COURAGE, FORTITUDE, AND INTEGRITY IN SUPPORTING HUMANITARIAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSES.”

Letting a Pack Train Carry the Weight in the Sierra High Country

– CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 –

orientations to the next day's activities, and then headed off to meet our sleeping bags.

Acclimatizing before the official start

Our first two mornings, we awoke to crisp sunrise temperatures. Outside, the water bags had frozen overnight. After an ample delicious breakfast of pancakes, sausages, and "camp coffee," we carpoled to the Mosquito Flat parking area at the end of Rock Creek Road, at 10,200 feet. We hiked one of several trails that lead up the canyon, offering fantastic views of beautiful Little Lakes Valley and the surrounding 12- and 13,000-foot peaks. Our first acclimatizing hike was a 4.5 mile round trip that followed the Mono Pass Trail to turquoise colored Ruby Lake at an altitude of 11,129 feet — that's Ruby Lake and Mono Pass in Inyo County, as there is another Ruby Lake in Tuolumne County and a different Mono Pass in Yosemite National Park.

The next day we were taxied to the official start of the trek, Devils Postpile National Monument. We stopped briefly at Minaret Summit Vista Point near Mammoth Mountain to get a fantastic birds-eye view of the back country through which we would be trekking over the next ten days. With a little imagination we could even see Donohue Pass, the highest point of our trek! The valley of the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin lay before us, making its way south before it would turn west toward Fresno. Since the distance to our first camp was only six miles, we took the opportunity to visit the famed Devils Postpile itself, a collection of 60-foot-high hexagonal pillars of basalt, formed less than 100,000 years ago in a cooling lava flow, then cropped by glaciers, leaving the unlikely collection. After lunch many took an opportunity to cool off in an idyllic cascading stream before joining the pack team and stock at camp near Johnston Meadow.

Nutritious and delicious food

The trip announcement advertised food to be nutritious, delicious and in quantities to feed you well. As the packer's notes announced accurately:

"The smell of fresh coffee on the stove; the muffled sound of mules munching their morning grain; quiet words of reassurance as the packers groom and tack the stock in preparation for the day's move. That is the alarm clock that awakens you to a new morning of hiking with pack stock. You pack your duffle and take down your tent between sips of fresh hot coffee, tea, or cocoa.

A table is set up with lunch meat, cheese, breads, cookies, nuts, fresh fruit, and candy. You bag up your selections before breakfast, which is usually served around 7:30. During your hearty hot breakfast, guests and crew agree upon where to meet for the next camp and any side trips you might take. Now you can shoulder your day pack and start hiking toward the



ON THE INITIAL ACCLIMATIZATION HIKE, MARY ENJOYS A VIEW OF LITTLE LAKES VALLEY, WITH 13,713 FOOT BEAR CREEK SPIRE TOWERING OVER THE HEAD OF THE VALLEY.

next camp. Those of you who are backpackers will be amazed at the food served on the trip. Fresh fruit and vegetables are served throughout the trip. Dinners typically include hamburgers, grilled chicken, pork chops, steak, roast beef, ham, or corned beef. The pack station serves a full breakfast, such as eggs, hash browns and bacon, or pancakes and sausage."

Traveling with stock

We were accompanied by the pack team comprised of the lead packer, an assistant, and the cook. The stock, two horses and eleven mules, carried the pack team and all our food, kitchen gear, charcoal and propane tanks (due to drought conditions we were not allowed to make camp fires at all this year), camp chairs, and of course personal duffels full of tents, sleeping bags, extra thick air mattresses, extra clothes, and whatever else you wanted to bring along within a 35 lb. weight limit. Without the stock performing their beast-of-burden duties, I personally would no longer be willing or able to carry the heavy backpack necessary to enjoy wilderness trips of ten days.

When in camp the stock animals were picketed (tied) on a line to keep them from roaming around camp or chewing the bark on the trees. They were allowed to head off to graze during the night, and before sunrise the packers would head off to gather them up. Stock grazing is supplemented by feeding them a special grain, prepared without seeds in order to protect the wilderness from invasive plants.

When released for grazing and before leaving camp the mules would take the opportunity to explore the camp,

galloping between the tents and having themselves a dirt bath by rolling in the dirt, which created great clouds of dust. This provided us all with more than a little anxiety and much entertainment. It took a few days to feel totally comfortable around the stock when they were set free.

Grazing was not allowed in some of the areas around our camps. We were surprised that sometimes the stock were not allowed to graze freely for several days at a time.

A typical day between camps

Typically after breaking camp, packing our duffels, and having breakfast, we would start our hike to the next camp. The stock crew would pass us up sometime around lunch. By the time we hiked into camp pack animals would be unloaded, the kitchen set up, and our gear laid out on tarps. Our task then was to find the perfect tent spot and get ready for hors d'oeuvres.

Besides having all of our gear transported, additional luxuries of traveling with stock included having camp chairs and the tarps that the packers deployed if inclement weather threatened. The great weather this year made the tarps unnecessary on this trip, but on previous trips it saved us from having to sit for hours in our tent waiting for the rain to stop.

Conservation issues

We had informal discussions that touched on several conservation issues, including the water shortage that the west is currently going through, and various proposed solutions such as water conservation, dam building, and diversion to recharge our aquifers. We were all given written information provided by the National Park Service about "Leave No Trace" principles and were reminded about these intermittently. Wilderness conservation was a frequent topic, which included reviewing the rules of setting up camp, wilderness toileting, and of washing clothes and bodies at a safe distance from streams and lakes.

Answering nature's call in camping areas was an important conservation issue. At each camp the packers set up a sit-down toilet, a deep pit covered by a seated wooden box and surrounded by a tent. This would be disassembled and the hole covered up when we moved on to the next camp. Rules of what could go into the toilet depended on whether we were in the National Park (nothing but organic waste, not even toilet paper) or in the National Forest and John Muir Wilderness (toilet paper allowed). Mules on the other hand—well, enough said! Manure deposited around camp had to be raked up by the pack team and dispersed in an attempt to leave the camp usable by the next group. We usually stayed in designated pack camps. We too were encouraged to use the rake after breaking camp to return our tent site to the way it was before we set it up.

Highlights of the Trek

I will mention just a few of the many highlights. On one of our four layover days, we day hiked to Minaret Lake, 9,800' at the foot of Minaret Pinnacles in the Ritter Range. Located within Ansel Adams Wilderness, this is one of most

beautiful lakes in the Sierra. It is surrounded by strikingly colorful granitic outcroppings, sharp peaks, and sparsely distributed but highly picturesque pines.



THIS SIERRA CLUB OUTING HIRED PROFESSIONAL PACKERS BASED ON THE EASTERN SLOPE OF THE SIERRA NEVADA.

Another day hike took us to Ediza Lake. At 9,291' it lies directly at the foot of 13,143' Mount Ritter and 12,936' Banner Peak. Also in Ansel Adams Wilderness, this lake is truly a gem, surrounded by forests, meadows, and granite boulders.

We camped two nights at Thousand Island Lake, 9,840' and one of the most spectacular lakes in the Eastern Sierra. Both the John Muir and Pacific Crest Trails skirt this lake. We were captivated by breathtaking sunrises and sunsets, and the lake reflections of Banner Peak. Day hiking around the lake on our layover day was particularly enjoyable with grand vistas and abundant pink-flower-bedecked fireweed bushes decorating the lakeshore. I will long remember enjoying a very relaxed lunch on the end of one of the narrow peninsulas, almost completely surrounded by water, watching three redhead ducks landing nearby. An



USING STOCK GAVE US SEVERAL CAMP COMFORTS THAT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PRACTICAL ON A TYPICAL BACKPACKING TRIP. BESIDES FOLDING CHAIRS, THERE WERE LARGE TARPS SO WE COULD STAY OUTSIDE OF OUR TENTS IN THE EVENT OF RAIN.



ON ONE OF OUR FOUR LAYOVER DAYS, WE HIKED THE SHORES OF THOUSAND ISLAND LAKE, THE SOURCE OF THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER, AND ENJOYED A GRAND VISTA FROM OUR CAMPSITE.

osprey soared overhead, then dove to catch its trout lunch before flying off to tall trees not far from camp. Several of us took the opportunity to fly fish, catching appetizers for our meal that day.

Summitting Donohue Pass at 11,066' gave us all a great feeling of accomplishment. From here we enter Yosemite National Park, and in two days we would finish our trek at Tuolumne Meadows, but for now we were on top of the

world. Before us stood Mount Lyell, 13,114', the highest peak in Yosemite National Park, its glacier hiding from us on its northern flank. Looking southeast, back from where we had come, we were reminded how high and far one can get taking one step at a time. To the east we could see the White Mountains, and to the north Kona Crest and Lyell Canyon, where we would camp on our last night in the wilderness.

“The mountains are calling and I must go....”

— John Muir



AT THE SUMMIT OF DONAHUE PASS, THE HIGHEST POINT IN OUR TRIP, WE ENTERED YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK.

Editor’s Note: The Sierra Club and Stock Use in the Sierra Nevada

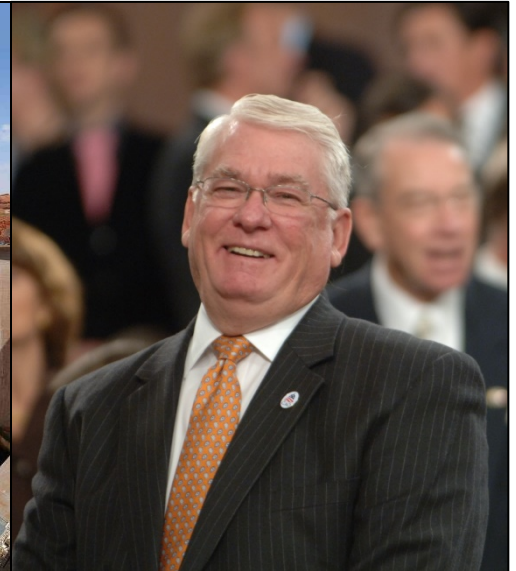
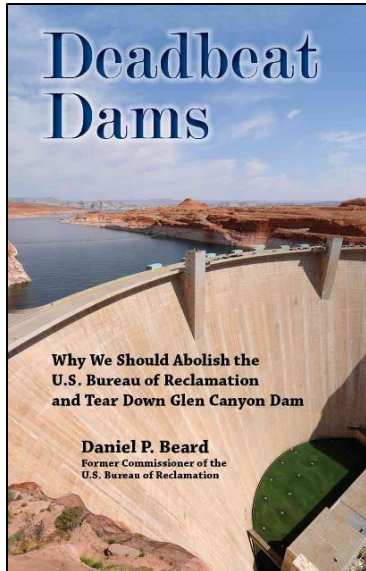
Early in the twentieth century, notions of wilderness recreation encompassed, as Aldo Leopold put it, “the primitive arts of wilderness travel, especially canoeing and packing.” In 1921, Leopold suggested that designated wilderness areas should be at least large enough to allow for a two-week pack trip. Long-distance hikers like John Muir, who struck out for days in the backcountry, were not the usual wilderness user. Visitors typically entered the region with the aid of pack stock, camping at lower elevation and alpine meadows so they could let their animals free to graze at night. The popularity of this method of travel was the impetus for development of a trail system in the national parks and other primitive areas. The John Muir Trail, as a prominent example, was conceived as the route closest along the Sierra crest as would allow a horse to traverse the entire length of the range. One of the goals of the early Sierra Club was to introduce as many members as possible to the wonders of the high country, so as to create a corps of activists who would lobby for preservation of wildlands in the new national parks. The Sierra Club was incorporated “to explore, enjoy and *render accessible* the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast...” Sierra Club outings in the first half of the century were very large affairs, numbering as many as 275 participants including packers, who stayed in the high camp for as long as a month. As backcountry users and managers began to note the adverse impacts of pack stock in trampling vegetation, eroding trails, and fouling rivers with animal waste, the consequent debate centered not on eliminating stock use in the wilderness, but on reducing the size of the stock-supported parties. In 1947, high trips were reduced to no more than 125 people. Further discussions centered more on establishing a national wilderness preservation system than on reducing impacts by visitors. David Brower noted, “Those who like best the most Spartan of wilderness trips—cross-country backpacking—must make haste slowly in any attempts to impose such trips upon others, or there may be too few men in the wilderness to protect it.” William Colby, secretary of the Sierra Club for 46 years, who had organized and led these high trips annually for 29 years, defended the large high trips by arguing that the number who enjoyed the mountains through these trips “more than made up for the fact that the Sierra Club pack trains did eat up a great deal of grass.” Since 1946, the Sierra Club has cooperated with associations of commercial packers in keeping stock camps clean. These organizations have been instrumental in helping

improve packers’ methods and equipment in order to preserve the High Sierra wilderness. Sierra Club leaders supported continued stock use, but realized that the emphasis on improving access with more trails and roads would endanger the character of the high country in the parks. In 1951 the Sierra Club revised its statement of purpose to read “explore, enjoy, and preserve the Sierra Nevada and other scenic resources of the United States.” High trips continued, but the new emphasis was on minimum impact camping. The Club published a guide, *Going Light—With Backpack or Burro*, edited by Brower. Even as the individual outings became smaller and more self-reliant, the total number of people participating in the outings increased dramatically. The belief that the mountains are big enough to sustain high use and recover from impacts persisted into the 1960s. Then, with the passing of the Wilderness Act in 1964, the explosive awakening of ecological awareness in 1969, and the ready availability of ultralight aluminum-frame backpacks, the numbers of recreational wilderness users increased dramatically, increasing tensions between backpackers and stock users. In 1970, the Sierra Club commissioned a series of studies examining the social and environmental impacts of recreational stock use in wilderness, documenting for the first time the conflict between hikers and stock users. The study recommended that pack stock should be regulated and restricted to areas specifically set aside for stock use. The Club changed its own stock-supported trips, reducing numbers of animals and allowable weights. The famous high trips were abandoned in 1972, and stock trips were limited to 25 participants. Stock users around the country began to organize in response, realizing that if they didn’t clean up their act and change their image, they could lose their right to use horses in the protected wilderness. 1979 saw the founding of the Back Country Horsemen of America, a service and education organization of non-commercial wilderness stock users with a mission to protect backcountry stock access to federal lands. Commercial outfitters and guides actually represent only 30 percent of the total wilderness pack and saddle stock users. On the other side, the High Sierra Hikers Association formed in 1991 to ensure that stock use is regulated and managed in a way that protects the High Sierra wilderness. Accused by BCHA of advocating the total removal of all pack and saddle stock from the wilderness, leaders of HSHA state that they aim not to ban, but “seek only reasonable limits and controls to protect meadows, wildlife, water quality, and the experience of wilderness visitors.”

Book Review: **Deadbeat Dams**

by Heather Anderson

As a native Californian, I am vitally concerned about western water issues, although not well-versed in their complexity. As a non-scientist, I find many books on these issues difficult to understand. Not so, *Deadbeat Dams* by Daniel Beard, former commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and director of many legislative and executive federal government offices regarding western water policy. Beard's experience of more than four decades as advocate for reform of water resource policy and management issues lends credence to this work.



His writing follows in the footsteps of Mark Reisner's *Cadillac Desert*, which I found to be a page-turner. Daniel Beard's *Deadbeat Dams* not only details the corruption, lack of common sense, and waste of taxpayer dollars in our current, non-functional western water policy, but also provides an agenda for reform, as he offers ways to restore and protect our rivers rather than to engineer yet more massive concrete structures.

Californians are now fifteen years into a MEGADROUGHT, the worst in almost a thousand years. What may result from this water crisis? Rising food prices, billions of wasted taxpayer dollars, and our national economy impacted. We need to change our ineffective western water policy and face our water problems.

At a 1995 conference, Commissioner Beard predicted that public and political support for large dam construction projects was fading away. He later found that to be a false prediction. In the twenty years since that time, proposals began instead to increase in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico. Why? Beard surmised that the general public was no longer interested in fighting over water and had tacitly agreed to let the self-interests of the water-elite and Congress take over. We should be angry about that as well as about squandering billions of dollars.

He outlines a ten-point plan we should press to adopt as a roadmap for fixing a broken water policy and making a more productive one.

1. Catering to the Water Nobility should be stopped. Our money and our environment should not be under the control of a small group of people with a self-serving agenda, nor under the control of members of Congress for political perks. (Beard defines the Water Nobility as a small group of folks and organizations who feel it is their birthright to control western water policy, and receive billions of dollars in subsidies.)
2. Federal government should not subsidize the delivery of water from its projects.
3. The Bureau of Reclamations should be abolished.
4. An independent commission, not Congress, should recommend the water projects to be funded each year.
5. Beginning with the Glen Canyon Dam, we should continue to restore our rivers by abolishing unnecessary and environmentally destructive dams. ("Dams kill rivers.")
6. We should terminate involvement with the largest irrigation district in California.
7. Settlement of American Indian water rights claims is important, but should not be used as an excuse to build uneconomic water projects.
8. We must use the best science and most accurate factual information possible to solve water problems.
9. Solutions to water problems using new, innovative, low-cost solutions that promote conservation and efficient use of water should be encouraged.
10. We need to integrate the realities of climate change when solving future water problems.

There is no “new water”; we cannot make it or develop it. After 50 years of building new dams and aqueducts in Northern California to send water south, and sending water west from the Colorado River to Los Angeles, even the Metropolitan Water District is beginning to use conservation, water storage, and transfer fees to move water around the state. Scrap the dams.

Finally, conservation and efficiency are seen to be the cheapest, fastest, and most effective ways to solve our future water needs. Water Policy in the west belongs to all of us, not just a few, and we need to craft a more functional, thoughtful, and democratic policy to serve our communities. Water is a necessity of life, and critical to a healthy and economic future. It also provides us with habitat, a source for recreation, aesthetic beauty, solace, and inspiration.

Deadbeat Dams (2015) is published by Johnson Books, of Big Earth Publishing, in Boulder, Colorado.

From the annals of the Sierra Club:

Sacrifice of a Natural Wonder

America's Most Regretted Environmental Mistake

by Bob Turner

One of the saddest stories in the history of the Sierra Club was the devil's bargain that traded away a unique and little-explored natural wonder in the upper basin of the Colorado River in order to save the canyons at the center of Dinosaur National Monument from being inundated by the proposed Echo Park Dam. The loss of Hetch Hetchy Valley in the middle of an established national park was in the memory of many still-living Sierra Club members. In an era of prolific dam building, no one wanted to set another precedent for creating reservoirs inside a national park or monument.

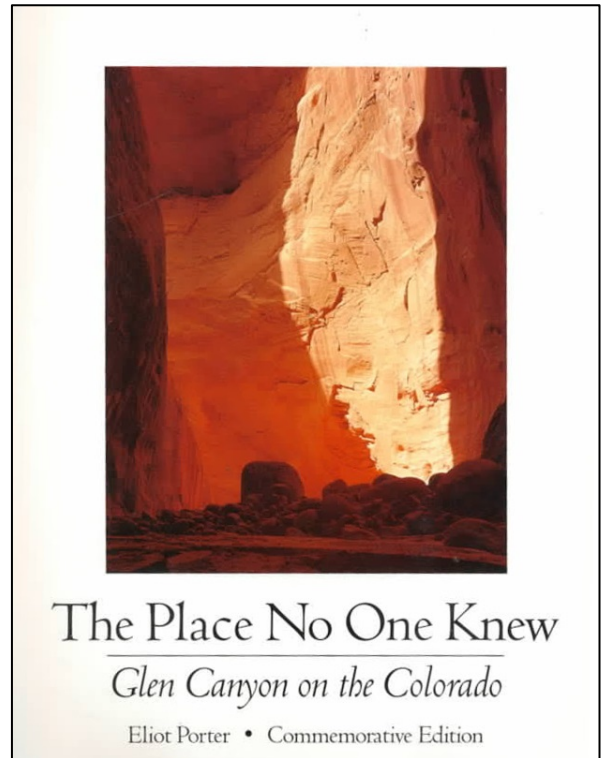
Glen Canyon and its environs had once been scheduled for preservation in the 1930s, but the prospect of potential uranium resources in the dawning atomic age removed the area from consideration. It remained unprotected and relatively unknown, especially compared to its rugged counterpart downstream.

“Glen Canyon died, and I was partly responsible for its needless death,” wrote David Brower in 1963 in the introduction to *The Place No One Knew*, one of several magnificent “Exhibit Format” books published by the Sierra Club in 1960s. “Neither you nor I, nor anyone else, knew it well enough to insist that at all costs it should endure. When we began to find out it was too late.”

Unlike in other portions of the Colorado Plateau, this extensive canyon system above Lees Ferry was eroded down to an extremely resistant horizontal rock formation known to geologists as the Kaibab Limestone. Because the river and several major tributaries had reached this base level over a lengthy distance, the Colorado throughout Glen Canyon was relatively placid without the roaring rapids that characterized Cataract Canyon upstream and the Grand Canyon below, making for leisurely rafting and easy hiking up into the side canyons, an altogether different experience from rafting other portions of the Colorado River. The extensive terraces were also home to a rich riparian habitat.

John Wesley Powell and his men were the first non-native explorers to visit its depths, in 1869. “So we have a curious ensemble of wonderful features—carved walls, royal arches, glens, alcove gulches, mounds and monuments. From which of these features shall we select a name? We decide to call it Glen Canyon.”

For several reasons, including serving as a sediment trap to prevent silt from building up behind Hoover Dam, the Bureau of Reclamation was determined to build a dam above Lees Ferry. With Dinosaur Monument out of the picture, the Glen Canyon project morphed from a low dam to the tall one that stands there today. Once the steel gates dropped on the main channel, the river ecology below the dam was altered irrevocably. The reddish-brown color that gave the Rio Colorado its name became blue-green as silt and sediments from the upper basin were no longer carried by the river through its main gorge.



Besides altering the natural character of the Colorado River in the national park, the reservoir's purpose as water storage was also a dismal failure. A tremendous amount of water is lost continuously not only by surface evaporation but also through seepage into the porous Navajo Sandstone walls that define the edges of the lake. Irrigation and urban/industrial water supplies would be better served without the existence of Lake Powell.

In fact there never really was a choice between damming Echo Park or damming Glen Canyon, since the Bureau had always planned to build a dam at Glen Canyon, regardless of the outcome of the Echo Park debate. But with an apparent victory for the American environmental movement in saving Dinosaur National Monument from flooding, the Sierra Club failed to push further to save the little-known Glen Canyon when its time came due.

A world-class mountaineer with over 70 first ascents, David Brower became the Sierra Club's first executive director in 1952. Looking back on the Glen Canyon controversy from the year 2000, he wrote, "...in 1956 the Club directors instructed me, then executive director, to end the club's opposition to the construction of the dam at Glen Canyon if the two dams proposed upstream in Dinosaur were dropped. Instead of flying home immediately and calling for a special meeting, I just sat in Washington and watched the mayhem proceed. In a 1992 documentary in which I almost tearfully took the blame for Glen Canyon, producer John DeGraff kindly attributed my problem to my not having seen Glen before offering to give it away. I knew better: Wallace Stegner had told me, 'Strictly between us, Echo Park doesn't hold a candle to Glen.' I have worn sackcloth and ashes ever since, convinced that I could have saved the place if I had simply got off my duff."

Brower visited Glen Canyon shortly after the decision to build the dam, realizing immediately that this was no place for a reservoir. Together with renowned photographer Eliot Porter, Brower created the book, *The Place No One Knew*, as a testimony to Glen Canyon's unparalleled beauty and as a reminder of the value of wild and natural places. It became one of the signature works in the Sierra Club's Exhibit Format series. These large four-pound volumes of beautiful nature photography accompanied by text from the likes of John Muir and Henry David Thoreau, were successful in introducing the public to wilderness preservation and the Sierra Club, but began to lose money for the organization, some \$60,000 a year, after 1964. Many claim the books were the primary cause of the Club's extraordinary growth and rise to national prominence in the 1960s, when the Sierra Club expanded tenfold to 70,000 members, becoming the nation's leading environmental membership organization.

The loss of Glen Canyon galvanized member activists into action. Brower resolved not to allow any more dams in the canyons of the Colorado. The Sierra Club's famous full-page "battle ad," appearing in *The New York Times*, asked readers, "Should we also flood the Sistine Chapel so tourists can float nearer the ceiling?" It sparked a nationwide protest against the planned dams in Marble Canyon and the Inner Gorge of the Grand Canyon. Pro-dam forces got the IRS to suspend the Sierra Club's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, but membership more than doubled, and eventually further dam plans on the Colorado River were put down permanently.

Water managers strive to keep water quantities roughly the same between Lake Powell and Lake Mead, both to equalize the supplies of water for the Upper Basin states and the Lower Basin states, and to allow for enough depth in each reservoir to continue electrical generation, but the river basin has rarely provided enough water to fill both reservoirs. Lake Powell is actually not allowed to fill to capacity out of fear that an unanticipated high runoff year will overwhelm the dam. But most of this century has been characterized by drought and a fluctuating water level.

Managed releases of water from Glen Canyon Dam have attempted to recreate the natural floods that used to scour the river each year, heavily influencing the natural ecology of the Grand Canyon along the river. But the results have not been successful. Furthermore, the steadily cold water coming out of Lake Powell has created a death zone for native fish, which are adapted to survive in warm, silty water.

But the main utilitarian argument for the emptying of Lake Powell is the loss of 860,000 acre-feet each year, according to current estimates, six percent of the Colorado River's flow, to evaporation and seepage into the surrounding aquifer. It is unknown how much of that seepage is recoverable once the water levels go down. Much may be lost in downward flow away from the reservoir.

Draining Lake Powell would mean more water for the Colorado River states (especially Colorado and Utah), and for Mexico. It would restore the natural function of the river in the ecology of the Grand Canyon. Glen Canyon would emerge back into the sunlight and begin to recover the natural patina that comes of exposure to the elements. And this can happen without an expensive dismantling of the dam. Glen Canyon Dam can remain as a strange tourist attraction, like the Pyramids, a testament to the folly of modern civilization's environmental hubris.



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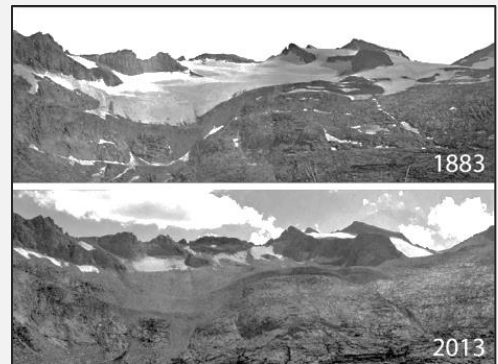
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Tehipite Topics will now be published only three times per year. Color versions of the *Topics* are available on the Chapter website at www.sierraclub.org/tehipite/newsletters. Back issues are archived on the website beginning from April 2004. Articles and photographs from Sierra Club members are always welcome for our coming issues. Send your contributions for the Spring 2017 issue by email to robertsturner52@gmail.com before March 15.

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