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Yahi
Group



Butte, Glenn, Lassen, Plumas & Tehama Counties

Imperiled Parks

By Rex Burress

The impact of monetary irregularities has been a big slash on some of our cherished park systems in the troubled times of 2009. When everything tightens up as money evaporates, it seems that aesthetic things like parks, environmental education, the arts, and libraries are often first affected. Such facilities as police, fire, and garbage service are deemed essentials, receiving priority.

Operating budgets seem to be forever convoluted, and even when I was with the Oakland park system in the

1970s, cutbacks started shortening the park staffs. Paul Covel's Naturalist Program avoided annihilation when the city was reminded that Lake Merritt Wildlife Refuge was a National Landmark for waterfowl and the birds depended on us. Four full-time staff were reduced to part-time workers with each retirement, including mine in 1993. I have a report that indicates the Oakland Nature Center is open fewer hours now, just as the Oroville Feather River Nature Center's open hours are now limited. In the 1960s, the thriving

Oakland Nature Center was open seven days a week to accommodate the public, conduct nature classes, and protect the wildlife.

The previous U.S. presidential administration undermined the value of parks and open space by its careless attitude toward resource ethics. It took a long time to establish an awareness of how important natural resources and conservation are in a wholesome environment, but the stroke of a pen can undo years of park advocacy work by dedicated people like John Muir and the

YAH! Club News

Bidwell Park: One of the Largest Per Capita Municipal Parks in the Country

By Grace Marvin, Yahi Conservation Chair

Many Yahi Group members were disappointed with the latest Chico City Council decision regarding the location of disc golf, but I will speak only for myself here. Please read this article IF you would like to know (albeit with limitations in my knowledge) an abbreviated story about what has recently transpired regarding disc golf in Bidwell Park. I have been representing the Yahi Group at some of the *Bidwell Park Master Management Plan*, *City Council*, and *Bidwell Park and Playground Commission* meetings bearing on disc golf, while also reading the papers, writing letters, and discussing related concerns. After the history, below, I would like to ask you to help protect the park from environmental damage through some specific measures.

Despite protestations at city meetings from individuals and groups concerning environmental damage from disc golf at the

Highway 32 site in Upper Park, disc golfers won their wish to get the *long course* officially sanctioned by the city. The *long course* had been played for over ten years, illegally, on wild lands that the city bought in 1993 (to create an addition to the park). Because playing the *long course* requires special skills, only advanced disc golfers play it. The advanced players created less ecological damage than more junior players who played the *short course* (also illegal), nearby. An explanation is that more advanced players do not have to stray as much to retrieve their discs as do beginners. There are fewer advanced players as well.

The Highway 32 site in which both the *long* and *short courses* are played has magnificent trees, other flora and fauna, as well as spectacular canyon views. Flying hard discs hit both trunks and branches, and players walking under the trees kill the vegetation and compact the soil. Less rainwater is absorbed in the compacted soil leading to progressive erosion of the thin soil cover and tree loss. All these factors mean that many trees are dead or are dying. (Disc golf does not utilize soft Frisbees which would do less damage.)

When the City Council sanctioned just the *long course*, it seemed that was a compromise many Yahi members might accept -- despite reluctance to go against the wishes of Annie Bidwell: she had donated the original parkland to the city, at the beginning of the 20th Century, with the understanding that it would be kept wild. The City Council directed the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission (BPPC) to locate one or more alternative sites for the *short course*. This was the other half of the compromise from my perspective, i.e., the nearby *short course* would have to be removed from its Upper Park location, even though the *long course* could stay there. Again, both courses are near each other on the park land that the city acquired in 1993 -- next to Highway 32.

The BPPC had several meetings during which few if any disc golfers became involved in choosing or evaluating site selections made by the BPPC. Nonetheless, the BPPC undertook the task and came up with alternative sites for the *short course*. After making their recommendations to City Council, some saw the results as not at all surprising: the disc golfers stated that the proposed sites were basically unacceptable as alternatives to the course near Highway 32. (Moreover, it seems that disc golfers had been quite effective in making their case to local politicians behind the scenes: they were able to change the minds of some of the councilors who

Newsletter Contacts

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The newsletter is mailed free to all current members of the Sierra Club residing in the Yahi Group area. It is also available, without charge, at selected public places and merchants in the Yahi Group area.

For submissions, comments and inquiries, please write to Sierra Club, Post Office Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927 or contact the content editor Susan Sears at 530-532-0149 or the copy editor Louise Casey at 530-872-9159.

For advertising in the Newsletter, please call John Woods (530-899-8607). For changes in membership address (which also affects the address for receiving the newsletter by mail) please write to Sierra Club Member Services, Post Office Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80328-2968; sending a mailing label for the old address will speed the process.

Submission Guidelines:

Please include name, phone, and address with each submittal. Short, single topic articles are preferred. Deadlines for proposed articles and letters to the editor: February 1, May 1, August 1, and November 1. A one week extension is available if the submission is sent by e-mail and advance advisory has been provided that the article is forthcoming. Submissions will be returned if specifically requested and accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The right is reserved to edit all submissions for reasons of space, clarity and potential libel. The opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Sierra Club or the Yahi Group.

Sierra Club Yahi Group Contacts

General Contact

Linda Stuke: 530-345-2696
She will relay inquiries or comments to the appropriate person.

Executive Committee Officers

Chair: Dave Garcia
530-533-2357 or rangerdave@mynvw.com
Vice Chair: Goodie Sweatt
894-3988 or gsweattsclub@sbcglobal.net
Secretary: Annette Carey
872-3557 or annettecare@sbcglobal.net
Fifth Member: Barney Hope
343-4026 or bh.csuchico@gmail.com
Fifth Member: Jan Hildenbrand
894-0438 or janmh2@sbcglobal.net

Point Persons

Westwood, Chester, Lake Almanor, Susanville and Greenville: Fred Binswanger
530-256-3197 or sbins@citlink.net
Portola, Greenville, Quincy: John A. Shower
530-284-6856 or theshowers@frontiernet.net

Committee Chairs and Other Contacts

Chapter Rep. To Motherlode: Grace Marvin
530-893-1994 or g-marvin@sbcglobal.net
Conservation Chair: Grace Marvin
530-893-1994 or g-marvin@sbcglobal.net
Election Committee Chair: Betty Volker
bettyv5@juno.com

Membership: Gerda Lydon
530-343-9277 or PLydon2948@aol.com
Newsletter Editor: Susan Sears
530-532-0149 or sjssears@sbcglobal.net
Newsletter Publication: Louise Casey
530-872-9159 or YAH!news@comcast.net

Newsletter Distribution -

Steve Miller: 530-345-0806
Dave Nopel: 530-342-4118

Outings: Alan Mendoza
530-891-8789 or ajmendoza@prodiqy.net
Political Chair: Bob Woods
530-893-8656 or MathContr@aol.com
Program Chair: Gerda Lydon
530-343-9277 or PLydon2948@aol.com

Publicity:

Skip Augur: 530-893-9222
Wendy Woods: 530-899-8607 or
woodsofchico@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer: Paul Krause
530-894-2931 or paul@paulkrause.com
Trail Maintenance: Stephen Sayre
876-1391 or stephensayre@att.net
Yahi Website: Louise Casey
530-872-9159 or YAH!news@comcast.net

Action Area Contacts

Bidwell Ranch: Betty Volker:
bettyv5@juno.com and Pat Kelly 345-1135
Chico Sustainability Committee: Julian Zener: julianzener@sbcglobal.net
Rep. to Butte County General Plan meetings
- Mary Watters: maryjwatters@sbcglobal.net

YAH! Club News

Bidwell Park

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originally asserted the need to find alternative sites for the *short course*. Furthermore, a city councilman was elected late last year who was on their side.) *The City Council then voted 5-2 to allow the short course to remain in Upper Park for up to five years, so that disc golfers would have more time to find an acceptable location for that course.* (FYI: Councilors Ann Schwab and Mary Flynn opposed the decision.)

But for many Yahi members, questions remain: What will be done to minimize the ever-growing damage disc golfers create when they play that same *short course* for, possibly, five more years? What incentives do they have to relocate sooner? The Bidwell Park Master Management Plan listed only some of the necessary mitigations for the *long course*. How can they be strengthened? There seem to be more discussions of toilets and trash removal at city meetings than about protection of natural resources. Thus, some would suggest that the city is far more interested in pleasing those who engage in intensive recreation than those who simply walk or hike on official trails in Bidwell Park. (It is worthwhile to recall that in one part of the updated Bidwell Park Master Management Plan (BPMMP), it specifies that only non-intensive activities may occur in Upper Park -- which includes the Highway 32 disc golf site. Note that there are both significant gaps and contradictions in

(continued on page 3)

that document.)

I have listed only some of the questions which you might want to raise, below. My suggestion: contact the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission,* being sure that you document the questions and answers you receive.

1) What progress is being made by the non-profit set up by disc golfers to help manage the *long course*? How much money will be involved in building and maintaining it, and what parties are supposed to pay for all the costs accompanying the new course? Will each party have enough money to make the project viable for both the players and the environment?

2) Are deadlines being promptly set concerning ways to minimize damage to the natural environment, i.e., the so-called *mitigations*? What, specifically, is being done to ensure that effective and affordable monitoring, e.g., of soil, tree, and plant conditions, will accompany both the interim and long-term management plans? For example, the park director said that the wet weather policy will be finalized by September or October. It is supposed to keep people off of that land which is subject to erosion until the wet grounds are dry again. How will it be implemented, when signs, alone, have not

Honoring Our 25-Year

It is with great pleasure that we honor the following who have been Sierra Club members for 25 years.

Connie and Don Brennan, Chico; Donald and Lorie Brooks, Chico; Vernon Carter, Oroville; Susan and Lincoln Colyear, Paradise; Paul Coots, Chico; Mark Donahue, Chico; Armeta Ferrini, Chico; Dr. Eugene Glick, Chico; Mary Helen Hardin, Paradise; Joe S.C. King, Chico; Loren Lewis, Magalia; Grace Marvin and Julian Zener, Chico; Marcy Matlock, Paradise; Kathy and Jim McKenzie, Gridley; Rosemary Neth, Willows; T. & L. Stigall-Smith, Oroville; Diane Wilkinson, Chico.

How the West Was

**Water + Air + Soil + Climate= LIFE
Clearcutting= Production of fiber, but
LOSS of clean and plentiful water, air and
habitat.**

It's up to you. Which do you value more? Do you want a world where the US is 5% of the population, but uses about a third of the world's timber, about half of which is made into disposable paper products? Or do you want a world where there is water you can drink and air you can breathe and diversity of species, a world that is not unbearably hot and barren? The words "irreparable harm". Easy enough to type and read. A different story to live in such a world.

A recent article stated that for every one environmentalist in Washington there are **eight lobbyists from big business**. I guess it isn't surprising that those of us who work on trying to change the way things are going find that the "public" agencies are, at best, uninformed and/or overwhelmed. At worst we find lies and corruption and collusion to allow big business to continue on its destructive path. We also find that all of the rules and restrictions that Big Business cries "poor, pitiful us" about so often are rarely enforced. I often wonder when the good of the many will start to outweigh the monetary needs of the few. The environmental activists I know are fighting a hard, uphill battle to introduce care and common sense into projects large and small. Many of us often feel overwhelmed, but we are not going away.

News from the Stop Clearcutting Front

In the past several months, a number of incredible volunteers and I have been tabling at different events to raise awareness about clearcutting. These amazing and helpful people include: Virginia Phelps, Patricia Lawrence and Pat Lind in Shasta County; Dave Garcia, Jan Hildenbrand and Goodie Sweatt in Butte County; Linnea Fronce and Tony Loftin in Sacramento and Shera Blume in Nevada County.

It was a given at the Whole Earth Festival in Redding that we would find many supportive people, but 95% of the people at other events that we were not so sure about have been supportive also. We have collected about 800 signatures on the Stop Clearcutting Petition and talked to a **lot** of people! In May, when the petition had about 600 signatures on it, we presented it to the Board of Forestry in Sacramento. My plan is to send it to many public representatives and agencies in the coming months after doing an online petition as well.

Please feel free to contact me for more info, to volunteer or if you have ideas about places to table: marily.woodhouse@mlc.sierraclub.org



Sierra Club Online

Yahi Group Web Site:
www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/
Motherlode Chapter Web Site:
www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/
Sierra Club Web Site:
www.sierraclub.org

Join the YAH! Blog

<http://yahinews.blogspot.com>

YAH! Outings and Events: Fall 2009

YAH! Programs for Fall 2009:

By Gerda Lydon, Yahi Group Program Chair

Please note: we are now meeting on the second Wednesday of the month, in September and October, in the Conference Room of the Chico Public Library, at 7:00 P.M. Also, the November meeting will be on the first Wednesday, November 4, on account of Veterans Day.

Wednesday, September 9: Gerard Ungerman, director and co-producer of "Belonging," will present this documentary. Narrated by Dustin Hoffman, it examines the various effects on humans, animals and the environment due to climate change. A question-and-answer period will follow.

Wednesday, October 14: Sierra Club member Loran Watson will share his slideshow "Exploring Yellowstone" with us.

Wednesday, November 4: "Traveling on a Shoestring in New Zealand and Malaysia" will be Sierra Club member Marilyn Steinheimer's slideshow. We will be seeing geysers, volcanoes, glaciers and penguins, along with lands of infinite variety and natural beauty.

Mountain Day Hike (grade 2, class C). Come enjoy one of Lassen Park's best kept secrets, the strenuous and scenic 7-mile trail up to Brokeoff Mountain. They'll be plenty of photo opportunities as we cross little creeks, hike along ponds, and pass through meadows up to a great view of Mt. Lassen. Thunderstorm cancels. Bring lunch, water, carpool \$ and entrance fees. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8:30AM. Return time around 5-6PM. Leader: Michelle, 865-9491.

Saturday-Sunday September 26-27: Yellow Creek Car Camp and Day Hikes (grade 1, class A) (Educational) A beautiful fall camp out along the shores of Yellow Creek, in the PG&E campground. There may be golden yellow aspens but nothing will shine brighter than yellow creek and its primary spring. We'll visit a pioneer cemetery, Indian grinding rocks, overlooking the meadows, and a soda spring. We may also view the northern edge of the Storrie fire

Winter 2009/2010 Outings

Coordinated by Alan Mendoza

September

Sunday, September 6: Caribou Wilderness Hike (grade 2, class B) (Conservation) Pass by over 10 beautiful lakes and several meadows in 7-8 miles of hiking in the relatively flat, forested terrain of the Caribou Wilderness east of Lassen Park. Will also drive through the newly proposed nearby wilderness area. Bring hiking boots, lunch, water and \$\$ for drivers. About a 140 mile round trip drive. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8:30AM. Leader: Loran, 345-8373 or djwats@hotmail.com; Asst. Leader: Alan, 891-8789.

Wednesday, September 9: Yahi Program "Belonging". Gerard Ungerman, director and co-producer of will present this documentary. Narrated by Dustin Hoffman, it examines the various effects on humans, animals and the environment due to climate change. A question-and-answer period will follow. Conference Room of the Chico Public Library, at 7:00PM. For further information call 343-9277.

Saturday-Sunday, September 12-13: Wades Lake Backpack (grade 1, class B) Enjoy this popular area after the crowds have left. We will stay at gorgeous Wade Lake where we can swim, boulder on headwall cliffs or bird on the lake's plateau. Sunday we'll visit two more lakes ranging from cool to freezing, but spectacular for viewing. Last year we had one of our best trips here. Individual commissary. Contact leader: John, 872-8258 or hubhollister@yahoo.com.

Saturday, September 12: Bidwell Park Day Hike (grade 2, class A) Take a mostly shady, flat 10 mile trek along the south side of Big Chico Creek. Meet at One Mile's Caper Acres at 10AM. Our walk is on paved park road past Five Mile to the upper park (via a gravel pedestrian/bike path) and ends at the golf course. We'll return to Five Mile to eat our lunch and return to parking lot by

2-3PM. Bring water and lunch, (or buy at golf course). Rain cancels. Leader: Gene, 873-1552; Asst. Leader: Carla, 891-6977.

Saturday, September 19: Brokeoff

Yahi Group's General Outing Information

The following information is intended for people who have decided to take or are contemplating an outing that has been organized by the Yahi Group of the Sierra Club. The information is based on the Group's established policy (available from the web site or from the Outings Committee Chair); it will be supplemented by trip specific information and by the outing leader.

Updates: Updated outings information can be found on our web site at <http://www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/>

Transportation: There is an active interest in car pooling, but leaders cannot organize car pools to Sierra Club outings. All trips begin and end at the trailhead, which is not necessarily the initial meeting place. Any car pool arrangements are private agreements between the driver and the passengers.

Riders are expected, as a matter of courtesy, to reimburse drivers to cover the transportation expenses of the trip. The customary amount is 10 cents per mile per passenger depending on the vehicle, the number of passengers and the road conditions. For example, one passenger only should pay the driver a little more and a car full of passengers should pay a little less. This is only a guideline.

Membership in Sierra Club not required: Outings are open to the general public unless otherwise indicated. If you enjoy the outings, it is hoped that you will see the value of joining; application information is available in this newsletter or on the website.

Fees and costs: Occasionally an outing announcement will indicate a cost. Unless the announcement specifically indicates that outing is a fund raiser, the cost indicated is only that which has been estimated to cover trip expenses.

Non-Sierra Club members are asked to make a \$2 donation if attending an outing to help defray our costs for outings

Sign-up: Most activities do not require advance sign-up; it is merely necessary to show up at the designated time and place. For those outings where advance sign-up is requested, a call to the leader will initiate the procedure. If fees or deposits are needed, the sign-up is not considered complete until those have been paid. Deposits may not be refundable; please inquire at time of making payment.

Outing Waivers: 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 chose 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.

All activities: These are group outings. It is important that participants follow the instructions of the outing leader. Please be sure you are in adequate physical condition to undertake the activity you choose (see classifications for guidance). If you are unsure of the difficulty of the trip or of your ability, check with the leader before deciding to go. The outing leader may decide to disallow the participation of an outing applicant if the leader concludes that the applicant's reduced preparation or capability may negatively affect the outing for the rest of the group.

Hiking and Day Activities: Bring lunch, water, and essentials, as well as reimbursement money for your driver. Wear boots or sturdy shoes.

Dos and Don'ts: Plan to carry out anything you carry in. Pets are not allowed unless the trip specifically indicates "pets permitted". No firearms. No electronic music devices.

Young people: Please consult with the leader for a decision as to whether the outing is appropriate for a youth, whether accompanied by an adult or not. Any person under 18 not accompanied by a parent must have a written parental authorization to give to the outing leader. Forms may be obtained in advance from the outing leader or from the Outings Committee Chair at 891-8789. The completed form is required to provide for emergency medical care if needed.

Errors in the schedule: If there is incorrect information in an outings announcement, please see the web site at

<http://www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/> or call Skip Augur at 894-1366 to obtain a correction.

Suggestions and Comments welcome:

Any comments on the outings or suggestions for future ones are always welcome.

Mail to Alan Mendoza; 6 Patches Drive, Chico, CA 95928 or e-mail ajmendoza@prodigy.net.

YAH! Outings and Events: Fall 2009

and learn how the forest service and Sierra Club took different positions, with our own Trish Puterbaugh winning. Rain or snow cancels. We don't want to ruin the roads. About 140 miles round trip. Must contact leader, John, at (530)872-8258 or hubhollister@yahoo.com.

October

Saturday-Sunday, October 3-4: Point Reyes National Seashore Weekend (grade 1, class A). Come enjoy the ocean, wildlife and unique hostel experience at Point Reyes, northeast of San Francisco. Herds of elk, white deer, and 200 species of birds, elephant seals and many other animals make this refuge their home. We'll walk or bike to the nearby ocean and enjoy the camaraderie of the hostel and the people who come from all over the world. We'll hike and have hostel fun (pot lucks and games, etc) in the evenings. Call for more information; space is limited. Leader: Jeanne, 899-9980; Asst. Leader, Alan, 891-8789.

Saturday, October 10: Cross-Country Ski Trail Maintenance (grade 1, class A) (Service). Free cross-country ski lessons for those who work on the McGowen ski area. Tools furnished by the Forest Service. Bring work clothes, boots, gloves, lunch and \$ for drivers. Meet at the Chico Park & Ride at 8:00 AM. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

Wednesday, October 14: Yahi Program "Exploring Yellowstone". Sierra Club member Loran Watson will share his slideshow with us. Conference Room of the Chico Public Library, at 7:00PM. For further information call 343-9277.

Saturday, October 17: Day Hike (grade 2, class B) Join us in a mid-fall trip to gorgeous Green Island Lake, Frog Lake, and Soda Creek Aspen Groves. This is a magical wilderness experience just two moderate miles from the road. We'll lunch at rarely visited Frog Lake, swing by Green Island Lake and proceed downhill to Aspen groves that should be in gorgeous color. Rain, snow, or muddy roads may prevent this trip but let's keep our fingers crossed. Chico Park N Ride at 8:30. A 100 mile round trip drive. Leader: John, 872-8258 or hubhollister@yahoo.com.

Sunday, October 18: Autumn in the Orchards Bike Ride. A flat leisurely 15 mile ride through orchards and pastures on quiet country roads to Durham Park for lunch, then return to Chico on the Durham Bike Path. Meet at 10AM at the Glen Oaks Memorial Park Cemetery office, Hegen Lane and the Midway. Bring water and a lunch (or buy one at the Durham Market). Helmets required. Rain cancels. Leader: Carla, 891-6977; Asst. Leader: Gene, 873-1552.

Friday, October 23: Thai Dinner at Thai Basil (grade 5, class D) After a tremendous hike from your parked car we will visit one

of Chico's many outstanding Thai restaurants for dinner. We can make Halloween plans over blazing red curry or cool vegetarian stir fries. All of Chico's Thai restaurants are outstanding, but we've never supped here. Let's try it at 6:30 between first and second streets on Broadway. If it is a pleasant evening we can take an after dinner stroll through historic downtown Chico. Please contact leader by Wednesday October 21 so I can work with the restaurant. John 872-8258.

Saturday, October 24: Make a Difference Day in Bidwell Park (Conservation). Come make a difference in Bidwell Park One Mile Recreation Area working on several projects: habitat restoration, remove litter and help weed around baby oak trees. Organized by Bidwell Park Volunteer Coordinator, Lise Smith-Peters at 896-7831. Call leader or Lise for more information. Leader: Carla, 891-6977; Asst. Leader: Gene, 873-1552.

Saturday, October 24: Cross-Country Ski Trail Maintenance (grade 1, class A) (Service). Free cross-country ski lessons for those who work on the Colby Meadows ski area. Tools furnished by the Forest Service. Bring work clothes, boots, gloves, lunch and \$ for drivers. Meet at the Chico Park & Ride at 8:00AM. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

November

Wednesday, November 4: Yahi Program "Traveling on a Shoestring in New Zealand and Malaysia" will be Sierra Club member Marilyn Steinheimer's slideshow. We will be seeing geysers, volcanoes, glaciers and penguins, along with lands of infinite variety and natural beauty. Conference Room of the Chico Public Library, at 7:00PM. For further information call 343-9277.

Saturday, November 7: Cross-Country Ski Trail Maintenance (grade 1, class A) (Service). Free cross-country ski lessons for those who work on the Colby Meadows ski area. Tools furnished by the Forest Service. Bring work clothes, boots, gloves, lunch and

Come to the Sierra Nevada this Fall

By Olivia Diaz, Volunteer Committee Co-Chair

Fall at Clair Tappaan Lodge is golden. Located at 7000 feet in the Sierra Nevada, the lodge experiences sunny days and crisp nights. In late September and October the leaves turn and change the color of the mountains. The Clair Tappaan Lodge and Hutchinson Lodge are located at 19940 Donner Pass Road in Norden/Soda Springs, California.

This fall there are two national outings and fall program offered by Lodge staff.

September 4. Full Moon Hike

September 20-26, 50+ Ridgetop Rambles, Tahoe National Forest, CA. A Sierra Club National Outing.

September 25-27. Weekend Lodge Work Parties: Come and help spruce up the Lodge you love. Volunteer for 6 hours on both Saturday and Sunday in exchange for free lodging and meals during the weekend. We'll also send you home with a 20% discount for a future weekend. Let us know if you have any special skills that you'd like to show off and share. Tasks during the weekend range from lodge cleaning and painting to firewood splitting and stacking and everything in between.

October 4-10, Pastel Painting along Sierra Trails, Tahoe National Forest, CA. A Sierra Club National Outing.

October 31/November 1 – Halloween party and Day of the Dead commemoration. Bring a costume, pumpkin(s) to carve and your tools, and a remembrance of a loved one who is no longer in this world.

November 26, 2009 (Thursday). Thanksgiving dinner at Clair Tappaan Lodge is always a fun event.

Directions to Meeting Places For Yahi Outings

Chico Park and Ride: From Highways 99 and 32, go east on 32 and make an immediate left onto Fir Street (it's only about 100 yards from Highway 99). We meet in the lot closest to the freeway.

Oroville Wal-Mart: Exit Highway 70 at Oro Dam Blvd., go east one block. Wal-Mart is on south side of Oro Dam Blvd. at Feather River Blvd. We meet at the northwest corner of the parking lot.

Paradise SaveMart: The parking lot is at the corner of Wagstaff and Clark Roads; we meet in the northwest corner.

Wildwood parking lot: Take East Avenue or Manzanita to Wildwood Avenue, the entrance to Upper Bidwell Park.

Sierra Club Hike Classifications

These are general guidelines. If there are questions, ask the outing leader.

Distance Rating	Elevation Gain Rating
Grade 1: up to 6 miles	Class A: up to 1000 feet
Grade 2: 6-10 miles	Class B: 1000-2000 feet
Grade 3: 10-15 miles	Class C: 2000-3000 feet
Grade 4: 15-20 miles	Class D: over 3000 feet
Grade 5: over 20 miles	

The Conservation Forum

Wild Country

By Rex Burress

On Hammon Street in Oroville, I noticed a yellow Toyota Land Cruiser, its large tires boldly marked with the words "Wild Country." It was parked in the road as if ready to go on a back-country expedition.

This ORV is a big vehicle with a powerful engine, the type being reduced in favor of more fuel-efficient cars in this age of dwindling oil reserves and high costs. Vehicular exploration is on the brink of being confined to main-road campgrounds in lieu of small auto units, which will lessen the burden on wild country areas but reduce the spirit of discovery, especially as it applies to rockhounds and adventurers in western spaces. Maybe it is time for those who are able to rough it into the mountains to get out the backpacks for Sierra Club-style treks and saunterings.

Seeing that Cruiser reminded me of how helpful that all-terrain trekker would have been 40 years ago when I had the rockhound passion to find gem rocks in the deserts and mountains. A station wagon definitely doesn't have the range of that big-wheeler, although I made it to Castle Peak in the Mojave Desert in my Rambler. I found an old shed out there in the Great Beyond, and backed into it out of the vicious wind, even though a loose piece of metal roofing clanked all night! I found petrified camel bones, cycad wood, and agate, as well as creosote bush, cactus, and reptiles. The allure is compelling, as you never know what you will find.

Back in Missouri days, I had a Model A after high school, and that high-clearance wonder could go about anywhere, even though I had to dig it out of the mud a few times. Once was when I took an old-timer to the American Bottoms to his blind for duck hunting, and the old "A" sank to its running boards in gumbo and had to be pulled out by a local farmer.

I did have a pickup camper once, and ventured too far down Last Chance Canyon in the Mojave and sank in the sand. I got a few agates but spent most of the day clawing for traction. It was no problem to drive out onto the Boron dry lake beds, park for a few days, and dig for the quality Boron petrified wood – and, if lucky, witness the grand blooming of the desert flowers. If I had had that Cruiser, I could have gone beyond, to where the really good stuff is found – at least you imagine bonanzas.

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Wild Country

By Rex Burress

On Hammon Street in Oroville, I noticed a yellow Toyota Land Cruiser, its large tires boldly marked with the words "Wild Country." It was parked in the road as if ready to go on a back-country expedition.

This ORV is a big vehicle with a powerful engine, the type being reduced in favor of more fuel-efficient cars in this age of dwindling oil reserves and high costs. Vehicular exploration is on the brink of being confined to main-road campgrounds in lieu of small auto units, which will lessen the burden on wild country areas but reduce the spirit of discovery, especially as it applies to rockhounds and adventurers in western spaces. Maybe it is time for those who are able to rough it into the mountains to get out the backpacks for Sierra Club-style treks and saunterings.

Seeing that Cruiser reminded me of how helpful that all-terrain trekker would have been 40 years ago when I had the rockhound passion to find gem rocks in the deserts and mountains. A station wagon definitely doesn't have the range of that big-wheeler, although I made it to Castle Peak in the Mojave Desert in my Rambler. I found an old shed out there in the Great Beyond, and backed into it out of the vicious wind, even though a loose piece of metal roofing clanked all night! I found petrified camel bones, cycad wood, and agate, as well as creosote bush, cactus, and reptiles. The allure is compelling, as you never know what you will find.

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The Conservation Forum

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Frederick Ruth
Solar Energy Consultant

Lic. #75018

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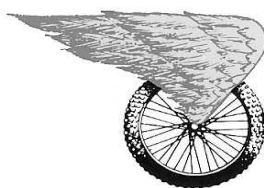


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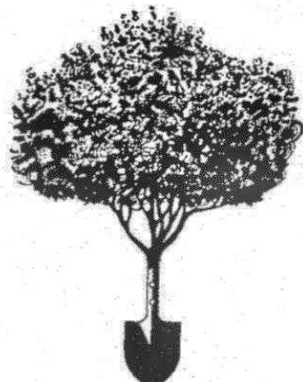
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