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## Blue Oak Group



Butte, Glenn, Lassen, Plumas & Tehama Counties

## Blue Oak Rising

*By Wendy McCall, ExCom Chair*

This January we've continued our commitment to a name change for the group, moving from the Yahi name and adopting Blue Oak officially as our new name. Oaks are common throughout the Central Valley. Blue Oaks are a particularly beautiful tree and are less prevalent and in need of protection and continued propagation throughout the North State and Central Valley. These trees have been devastated due to drought and recent wildfires. Through the adoption of this name for our group we hope to raise continued awareness of the needs for this magnificent tree.

We appreciate the input we received from all our members who voted on a name. The results from the two options in the election were nearly tied and after careful consideration and consulting our Mother Lode Chapter, ExCom voted to adopt the name Blue Oak. We hope that this name change will help bring about a new beginning, opening the doors for a more diverse and equally represented group, while strengthening ties in the community.

We send out a heartfelt apology to all our indigenous brothers and sisters who have felt and perceived our use of the Yahi name as hurtful and recognize the pain and anger that our use of the name has caused. The Sierra Club collectively is striving to recognize and consider the roles our organization has played in marginalizing indigenous people and people of color. Blue Oak would like to welcome everyone in continuing to strive for excellence, equity, inclusiveness, and justice, while we work together to fight for environmental protections, so that we may all continue to explore and enjoy this beautiful home we all share.

“To change everything, we need everyone. We're on a journey to become a more just, equitable organization—to be a community that brings together people from all walks of life to work together for a better world for everyone ...This is just the beginning of a long journey for Sierra Club; by centering our key principles of equity, justice and inclusion in every aspect of our work, we aim to transform ourselves and build a healthy, welcoming and sustainable community that celebrates people from all walks of life.”

~Nellis Kennedy-Howard

Director of the Department of Equity, Inclusion, and Justice.

## Blue Oak Executive Committee

Chair: Wendy McCall [lemasterwendy@live.com](mailto:lemasterwendy@live.com)

Vice Chair: Suzette Welch [booksontape@rocketmail.com](mailto:booksontape@rocketmail.com)

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Treasurer: John Hollister. [hubhollister@yahoo.com](mailto:hubhollister@yahoo.com)

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## Newsletter Information

*Blue Oak Group News* is published four times a year, in March, June, September, and December, by the Blue Oak Group of the Sierra Club, P.O. Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927. For changes in mailing address or email address, contact Suzette Welch, [booksontape@rocketmail.com](mailto:booksontape@rocketmail.com).

For submissions, comments, or inquiries, contact:

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Please include name, phone number, 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.

*Blue Oak Group News* reserves the right 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 Blue Oak Group.

## Join the Blue Oak Facebook Page

The Blue Oak Group of the Sierra Club has a Facebook page where people can find information about local conservation issues and events and post items of interest. Anyone can go to the page and ask to become part of the conversation.

## Gerda Lydon (1928– 2021) Hiker and Lover of the Outdoors



Sierra Club Yahi Group remembers Gerda as one of the original group founders, program chair, outings leader, newsletter mailing organizer and membership chair. She will be missed.

Gerda's son Mike Lydon announced that a memorial service for Gerda will be moved to June because of school/travel and covid concerns. We will be looking to possibly get an outdoor type location just in case there are still covid issues in June.

We are starting to plan for the week of June 19th to 24th. If you are interested in being notified, please email Mike Lydon - [memorialforgerda@gmail.com](mailto:memorialforgerda@gmail.com) and I can add them to the list.

On November 4, 2021, Gerda Lydon, a long-time resident of Chico, passed away at the age of 93.

Gerda was born on August 20, 1928, to Alfons and Dora (Schimetschek) Landeis in Vienna, Austria. She left during the early days of WWII, spending time in England before travelling by boat to New York and then meeting her family in the Dominican Republic. After high school she moved to Bogota, Columbia, with her family, before emigrating to the United States in 1952 and becoming a citizen in 1957.

Her love of hiking and outdoors led to her meeting her future husband, Philip Lydon, in 1959, on a Sierra Club outing, marrying later that same year. They moved to Chico in 1967 with their three young children where she became involved with many community activities, including helping out at her kids' schools. Being a Sierra Club member since 1955 she would often be out on hikes, camping, and enjoying the outdoors.

She was engaged with local community activities, such as the League of Women Voters, where she was a former president and observed the meetings of the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission for 30 years. She would help guide environmental preservations that would benefit the community for years to come. Later years would find her riding her bike through her beloved Bidwell Park with a social group of like-minded ladies, volunteering at the Discovery Shoppe, and attending cultural events. She volunteered as membership chair of the Yahi Group of the Sierra Club for many years. She was well known for her love of animals and nature.

Gerda was preceded in death by her husband, Phil. She is survived by their son and daughter in-law, Robert and Jana Lydon of Shingletown, CA, daughter, Sharon Lydon of Yuba City, CA, and son and daughter in-law, Michael and Robin Lydon of Boise, ID, as well as seven grandchildren and seven great grandchildren, a cousin, a niece, and nephews. In lieu of flowers the family asks you to consider donating to the Butte Humane Society.

# Club News

## ExCom Election Results

Thank you all for your participation in helping to elect ExCom members to represent us for 2022. Wendy McCall will continue to serve on the ExCom and continue serving as Chair. John Hollister was elected to the ExCom Board and will continue to serve as Treasurer .

Wendy McCall 70 votes  
John Hollister 68 votes

Our group is in need of additional support. We are still actively seeking a secretary, as well as a new webmaster, newsletter editor and political chair. If you feel you could step in to fill any of these roles, or have ideas you'd like to contribute, please contact us and let us know.

## Newsletter and Webmaster Retiring *(by Suzette Welch, ExCom)*

Louise Casey, our group newsletter editor, webmaster, creator / administrator of our group Facebook page has decided to retire. I would like to express the thanks of the membership for Louise's 20 years of service doing all of the many tasks which she has performed. During this time, among other things, she has managed to produce an informative newsletter four times a year from the copy and information sent to her. Sometimes I am sure she has felt like she was pulling teeth to get copy in by print deadline. Personally, she has always been a pleasure to work with, and I will miss her.

Louise has been over the years such an asset and integral part of the group, she will be very difficult to replace. In light of Louise's retirement at this time we are looking for volunteer(s) to take over the tasks of newsletter editor and of webmaster. The newsletter is published four times a year.

Contact Wendy McCall, Blue Oak ExCom Chair, [lemasterwendy@live.com](mailto:lemasterwendy@live.com) or Suzette Welch, Blue Oak Group Vice Chair, at [booksontape@rocketmail.com](mailto:booksontape@rocketmail.com)

### Newsletter:

Layout, edit and create PDF newsletter  
Send PDF version of the newsletter to Ed Caldwell for printing  
Send the newsletter PDF to the website person

### Website:

Post the newsletter quarterly  
Update other website sections as necessary. This is done whenever changes occur  
Post events and hikes on the event calendar

## Join the Conversation!

The Blue Oak Newsletter needs more input from the membership in general. So if you enjoy writing, we welcome you to contribute to the Newsletter. Submissions may be made in the form of informational articles, poems, essays, diatribes, book reviews or information about an event. So tell us what you are doing to get through the pandemic, write about an interesting outing you have taken, the ecological scene in a place you have visited, what you are seeing in your back yard or on your daily walk. Anything that inspires you to take to writing will be considered, especially ideas which will brighten someone's day or increase their knowledge about the natural world.

Articles can be as long as 500 words or less and may be submitted at any time before copy deadlines of February 1, May 1, August 1, and November 1. Please send submissions to Suzette Welch, Blue Oak Group Vice Chair at [booksontape@rocketmail.com](mailto:booksontape@rocketmail.com)

# Spring 2022 Outings and Events

Coordinated by Alan Mendoza. For updated outings information and for general information about outings and meeting places, please see our web site:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/blue-oak>

**Saturday, March 12 – Day Hike Yana Trail (2,B)** A 7.5 mile out and back hike starting from the Perry Riffle trailhead in the Sacramento Bend BLM area north of Red Bluff. We'll enjoy beautiful spring greenery and nice views of the Sacramento River and Mt. Lassen. Bring lunch, water hiking boots and \$ for drivers. Rain cancels. Sierra Club requires proof of vaccination. Each participant must show the Leader (1) a picture ID and (2) either proof that they are fully vaccinated or a negative Covid PCR test taken within 72 hours of the start of the outing. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8:30AM. Leader: Alan, 530-588-8031 or [ajmendoza@prodigy.net](mailto:ajmendoza@prodigy.net)

**Saturday, March 26 – Day Hike Table Mountain (2,B)** Enjoy the spring wildflowers and waterfalls of spectacular Table Mountain north of Oroville. We will hike for a total distance of 7-8 miles and visit Beatson Canyon and Coal Canyon and see at least 5 waterfalls. Bring lunch, water, sunscreen, boots and \$ for drivers. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 7:30AM or at Table Mountain parking lot at 8:15AM. Requires purchase of \$4.89 day land pass from state of California at: [ca.wildlifelicenses.com/InternetSales](http://ca.wildlifelicenses.com/InternetSales) Rain cancels. Each participant must also show the Leader (1) a picture ID and (2) either proof that they are fully vaccinated or a negative Covid PCR test taken within 72 hours of the start of the outing. Leader: Alan, 530-588-8031 or [ajmendoza@prodigy.net](mailto:ajmendoza@prodigy.net)

**Saturday, April 16 - Day Hike Dye Creek Preserve (2,B)** A private, 6-7 mile hike into the spectacular Dye Creek Canyon east of Los Molinos managed by the Nature Conservancy. Great views from the top of the Sacramento Valley and many spring wildflowers. Rain cancels. Bring lunch, water, hiking boots and \$ for drivers. Each participant must show the Leader (1) a picture ID and (2) either proof that they are fully vaccinated or a negative Covid PCR test taken within 72 hours of the start of the outing. **Limited space, reservation required.** Please email or call leader. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8:00AM. Leader: Alan 530-588-8031 or [ajmendoza@prodigy.net](mailto:ajmendoza@prodigy.net)

**Tuesday, May 24—Blue Oak Group Newsletter Mailing Prep.** Volunteers will once again be needed to get the Blue Oak Newsletter ready for mailing at the Lodge at the Terraces 2750 Sierra Sunrise Terrace in Chico. We will meet at 2 PM on May 24, 2022. It usually takes about an hour to get the Newsletters mailing ready.

For more information contact Suzette Welch, [booksontape@rocketmail.com](mailto:booksontape@rocketmail.com)

**Thursday-Sunday, June 9-12 - Backpack Yosemite National Park North Rim (3,C)** A four day loop backpack starting from the Yosemite Creek trailhead in Yosemite National Park. We will begin by setting up a car shuttle and then hike to the top of Yosemite Falls 7.5 miles with full packs and set up camp above the falls. On day two we will day hike to Eagle Peak for great views of Yosemite Valley and Half Dome. On day three we will pack 3-4 miles north to Lehamite Creek and set up camp. In the afternoon we will hike to North Dome for more great views. On day four we will pack out 4-5 miles and climb 1100' to our vehicles at Porcupine Creek. Shuttle required. Cost \$10 per person for permits. Individual commissary and you must bring full backpacking equipment. Leader has extra backpacks, tents, sleeping bags, pads, stoves, bear canisters to share. Bear canister required or you can also rent one at entrance station to park. Limited space. Reservation and advance payment of \$10 required to reserve your spot. Participants must show leader proof of full vaccination or negative Covid PCR test. Contact leader for more information and to make reservation and payment: Alan, 530-588-8031 or [ajmendoza@prodigy.net](mailto:ajmendoza@prodigy.net)



*I took this picture on a boat upriver in the mangrove forest here. It's a reddish egret, looks like it's trying to make like a third branch...Oh well, the marvels of nature...Ed*

## Paradise Recovers In Slow Motion

*By Ed Schilling*

It's been over three years since thousands of homes were incinerated by the Campfire, yet the struggle to find housing continues. Less than one in ten places have been rebuilt in Paradise. Rentals are hard to find. The cost of buying in Chico is still off the charts.

We finally gave up looking for housing in Chico after an eight-month search. People kept offering thousands more than the asking price. Who can play that game? It was time to rebuild on our lot in Paradise.

Why should there be so many obstacles to simply finding a place to live? There are literally millions of climate victims all across the nation: victims of hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and literally tens of thousands of fires. With so many towns and cities completely or partially “bombed out”, it's like WW2 all over again. Shouldn't we have a more comprehensive “Marshall Plan” for the climate instead of an impossible, hyper-impacted market mitigated by small, piecemeal solutions?

What is with this idea that 60,000 dollars in the bank is not enough to rent? Truth is, whatever amount you have, it's never enough. You need an income! And furthermore, that income must be four times the asking price of an apartment. Four times twelve hundred a month equals professional wages. And yet, \$60,000 in the bank, *or* one thousand a month in retirement income, will make you a citizen in Costa Rica.

My family did finally rebuild in Paradise. I also talk to people all the time about what their current situation is after losing their homes there. Many are still in their trailers, which they hauled up from some space rented in a Chico driveway, finally moving to their land after it was detoxified and cleared, about ten months after the fire. Many still share living quarters. My own relatives, for example, two former Paradise renters and one home owner, all now share just one rental apartment. My former next-door neighbor moved in with her family in Modesto. Three years out and many renters and homeowners are still “sharing,” or in trailers. Displacement and the search for a home didn't end a few months after the Campfire. It's an ongoing story.

After the fire, vulture capitalist contractors swooped down on Paradise from out of State or County, partially rebuilding homes, sometimes getting money out front and never starting. For example, I know a gentleman and his wife,

*(concluded on page 7)*

## Paradise Recovers In Slow Motion *(continued from page 6)*

both in their 80s, formerly living in Paradise before the fire a few blocks from me, who still rent in Yuba City. They waited and waited (like we did) for their home to be rebuilt, but were left holding the bag when their contractor left their house unfinished. This same contractor dropped nineteen other rebuilding projects (mine included). Finally, the Building Resiliency Center in Paradise had to send out notices to all involved with this contractor to either find another contractor or continue as owner/builders. Some projects have been stalled for over a year. And I know at least one person who made initial payments to another contractor who put up forms for the foundation, but hasn't been heard from since!

I was one of the lucky ones. I became an "owner/builder" and finished in "only" 16 months from the date of the original contract, which was supposed to be 6 months max. My 80 something neighbor is still trying to finish up. "Should have been a four-month build," said the plumber who did plumbing for both our places. This plumber and many other laborers still remain unpaid by the aforementioned contractor.

I don't know why people still wonder why there is a homeless problem in California. With so many "bombed out" places in California, the housing crisis and homelessness go hand in hand, and it gets worse every year.

As I mentioned earlier, there are multiple problems with buying and renting that make former renters and homeowners ineligible. We must adjust our thinking to at least make housing for climate victims guaranteed. Lost your home, but haven't rented in thirty years? Money in the bank, but no income? Not enough income? Granted, the solutions to rebuilding and simple housing are many (loans, grants) but they are piecemeal and ultimately inadequate. They do not address the myriad of individual cases for those who have suddenly lost their residences.

In November of 2018, the Paradise Campfire incinerated 11,000 homes and turned tens of thousands of residents into climate refugees. Three years later, only 1,196 homes have been rebuilt. About one in ten. Even those who work at the Building Resiliency Center admit it's going extremely slowly. Well, I know from experience that navigating all the steps to rebuild is daunting. Couldn't the process be streamlined? And when I hear of housing development projects planned for outside Chico, I think—why not just rebuild Paradise first? Most lots in Paradise are empty. I don't know, I guess I just don't like to see land laid fallow, especially when homeless folks live just down the hill.

I have a friend who is almost ninety who lost his home in the Campfire. He has a rental now in Chico, still wants to rebuild though. He's hesitated, so far, because of his age. But he's always working his land, and now he's decided to go for it. He's decided "I'm like Moses, I'll live to be 120!" Funny part is I believe him.

## Conservation News

# Does Every Cloud Have a Silver Lining? For You To Judge

By Grace M. Marvin, Conservation Chair ([g-marvin@comcast.net](mailto:g-marvin@comcast.net))



*This photo is from Bidwell Park in Butte County. (Chico Enterprise Record) See the CA Native Plant Society for information about the Blue Oak.*

**Losing our Editor:** We are immensely sad that our newsletter editor / webmaster, Louise Casey is retiring. She has done a remarkable job over several decades and won Sierra Club recognition, too. She was always exceedingly careful about editing our work, finding the best places for it, making an attractive paper, and meeting deadlines. She also entered our articles and announcements online. Louise continued volunteering for our club even after she had to leave Paradise for Washington after the Camp Fire. While we wish her well in Vancouver, WA, we fear we will have a hard time replacing her. (Are you able and willing to manage our paper? Contact Suzette Welch [booksontape@rocketmail.com](mailto:booksontape@rocketmail.com) or Wendy McCall [lemasterwendy@live.com](mailto:lemasterwendy@live.com) ).

**Climate Change:** As I write this article, the California Public Utilities Commission is deciding whether to remove the economic advantages of installing rooftop solar panels. I urged a small group of local volunteers to contact the CPUC and Governor Newsom about the Sierra Club's opposition to this plan. Would you like to be added to my email list – to be notified, primarily, about regional, state, or national legislation related to Conservation issues? Your responses to proposed legislation are sorely needed. (Grace Marvin at [g-marvin@comcast.net](mailto:g-marvin@comcast.net))

**Political and Social issues:** Activists are getting signatures of fellow citizens to address major redistricting and other political concerns. In Chico, some have also been addressing the homeless issue because the city would not even declare a Homeless Emergency for an estimated 571 individuals. This was despite much public outrage about the “houseless” people camping in parks and near waterways with highly visible trash, dilapidated tents, and more. And many (but not enough) citizens, are genuinely outraged about the city not treating the homeless humanely for such a long time. The city not only did not pick up trash, but they actually ordered police and other personnel to evict people from parks with no indication of another legally acceptable place where they could move.

As a result of this abuse, Northern CA Legal Services, representing eight specific homeless plaintiffs, filed a lawsuit against the city that took half a year of secretive negotiations. At last, Morris England, Federal District Judge, and the city signed off on an Agreement in January 2022, between the city and the eight plaintiffs. It requires that the city not penalize camping in public spaces until and unless there are sufficient numbers of indoor beds available for the

*(continued on page 9)*



## Does Every Cloud Have a Silver Lining? *(continued from page 8)*

homeless. (This agreement was based on the precedent setting Martin vs. Boise lawsuit.)

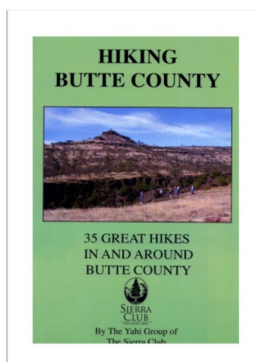
As a result of that Agreement, the city is constructing pallet shelters to house the homeless in the former BMX lot in south Chico. (Note that the city does not have to house people who will accept residence in the homeless shelter facility, called True North—which is expanding its capacity.) Each small pallet shelter has a lockable door, small windows, two beds that can be folded into the walls, an electric outlet, as well as heating, and cooling. The city will provide three meals a day and, very importantly, voluntary access to social services. Such services would help diagnose individuals and provide mental health services as needed. This assistance in getting people stabilized would have other elements for those not needing mental therapy, such as schooling, and/or job-training training. The goal for the city and for the homeless would be that they no longer need to live in the pallet community.

(There also are attempts to establish a campground for those individuals who are averse to living in a pallet community – described in the settlement agreement.)

Homeless people may have to wait a couple of months before they are allowed to move to the shelters. I asked the Sierra Club's Mother Lode Chapter if they would help pay for a trash service (I would try to find) to pick up trash of homeless in locations not currently served. This would facilitate sanitation as well as protection of Chico's parks and waterways. Since I found a good trash company that is willing, I await an answer regarding my request for a City permit request form; the City must grant approval before additional trash can be picked up. Great news: Mother Lode Chapter leaders enthusiastically said that Sierra Club funds should be provided for this cause!

Other Legal news: The Sierra Club is financially supporting our fight against a sprawling housing development in south Chico. "Valley's Edge" would destroy fantastic plants, trees, waterways, critters, vernal pools, and views. It would also mean a huge increase in traffic and air pollution, while not meeting any infill or affordable housing goals. The club and private donations have already funded a beautifully written legal challenge to the project's draft Environmental Impact Report, which was submitted to the City last December. More discussion later, after we hear their response.

May you continue to enjoy, protect and explore the beauties of nature -- such a refreshing contrast to the many woes of our world today!



### Hiking Butte County

*Hiking Butte County* is a wonderful field guide to hikes in and around Butte County. It was assembled by the outings leaders in the Blue Oak (formerly Yahi) Group under the direction of Alan Mendoza. In it you will find descriptions directions, distances and difficulty information for 35 hikes. This is the only book of its type for this area.

You can purchase it for \$11.95 at **Mountain Sports, The Bookstore** in Chico (118 Main Street) and the **Lake Oroville Visitor Center** (917 Kelly Ridge Road). Or you can order one directly from Alan for \$10 plus shipping. Contact Alan Mendoza, 530-588-8031 or [ajmendoza@prodigy.net](mailto:ajmendoza@prodigy.net)

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*Heartfelt thanks to these sponsors who make this newsletter possible.*

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