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Yahi Summer 2019 Outings and Events
Coordinated by Alan Mendoza

www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yahi/outings

Six Months after the Camp Fire Disaster
 By Annette Carey, Yahi ExCom



I live in Paradise. I have lived here for 35 years but have only been very aware of the danger of fire for the past 10 years. It was in 2008 that I first encountered the danger of escaping fire from a town that had only 4 escape routes. At that time, three of the four were blocked by fire and closed to residents as escape routes.

That is why when I first saw the black cloud on November 8 and heard my neighbor tell me that there was a fire, I knew I had to get out of town as quickly as possible, and I picked up my boyfriend who was walking and left after each packing a small suitcase and our dog into our cars.

Now it is six months later, and I am back in Paradise, but it is a different Paradise. My small lane escaped much of the horrendous flames that covered the rest of the town. But everywhere else it appears to be a town ravaged by war. Many trees have been cut down along the roads but still the cutting continues since 600,000 trees will eventually be removed that are dying from the fire's flames.

My garage debris has already been cleared away by FEMA as have two of my neighbors' home and shop. But there are some 13,070 lots still to be cleared by OES. Currently, there are 110 crews working in Paradise to accomplish this seemingly insurmountable task and this number will increase to 160 crews by this summer.

Dump trucks stream by on the Skyway and Neal Road in larger numbers than commuter cars and they are taking 20-22 tons of debris away each day. Each truck contains either cement, metal or ash debris and so each has a different destination where they must leave their contents. Crews are working 12 hours a day and 6 days a week to finish the debris removal by this fall and so far, they seem to be currently on schedule after rain delays.

The water is a different story. Since benzene was discovered in some water samples by PID, the irrigation company has been carefully moving through the town, isolating each section of pipe and testing for benzene.

Team Rubicon and PID are currently surveying all 19 square miles of Paradise to determine current water needs of residents and verifying standing structures. PID is asking the State General Fund for \$21.69 million for its operation and maintenance costs over the next 3 years. PID currently has \$3 million in reserves but without the one time appropriation, it will be insolvent in less than 6 months. There is a PID meeting scheduled for May 16, and we are all hoping for some good news.

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Positive Perspectives on Conservation

From Grace Marvin, Yahi Conservation Chair

We are all likely in need of some good news. Here, then, are comments about some of the more positive conservation news.

Countries, e.g., England, and numerous U.S. cities, including Chico, have officially declared Climate Emergencies. This will lead to constructive actions to fighting climate change: governments, businesses, progressive groups of all kinds, politicians and we-- individual citizens-- are promoting policies supported by the Sierra Club, 350.org, and the New Green Deal! Moreover, Kathryn Phillips, the excellent Director of Sierra Club-CA, reported that California's Governor Newsom, a father of four young children, is thinking and acting seriously to continue the climate change progress made by Gov. Brown, while adding his own initiatives. (Kathryn noted that Newsom's four young children are surely making a difference in how he sees our future.) At the Spring meetings of her/our SC-CA organization, she also said that Newsom has made it clear that CA's Energy Policy will not change, i.e., he will only add to the prior two CA Governors' plans to severely reduce the use of fossil fuels.

Moreover, Governor Newsom seems to care deeply about our forests, *unlike* recent Governors; thus, he will not ask advice only from logging companies as Gov. Brown used to do! Newsom has also presented an excellent wildfire report, which many of us have seen in a series in the *Sacramento Bee* and even in some local newspapers. This topic bears, of course, on climate change even as it directs us to adopt radically different policies than those having recently resulted in the very painful memories and consequences of fires destroying California communities. Newsom is especially interested in seeing that independent utilities companies, especially PG&E, are not allowed to behave (or even exist?) as they have. They must not be allowed to get away with irresponsible practices that result in preventable fires in our world's and California's ever more erratic weather conditions, e.g., more often extremely dry and windy, with homes too frequently built in the urban wildland interface.

At the afore-mentioned Spring meetings, I learned that even though Newsom is saying that one tunnel is better than two, he may not find enough money in our state's budget to make its cost-benefit ratio work out for us. We, who do not want the North State to become another dried out Owens Valley, are very happy about that. There may be a similar story about finances regarding High Speed Rail.

At this point, we do not have assurance that Newsom and other politicians will help us in building homes, sustainably, but we can take the opportunity to promote Smart Growth goals – supported by the Sierra Club and other progressive organizations. We do know that building more housing is a top priority for the Governor, but we do not want him or other legislators to permit building in the urban rural interface. Such building would not be healthy for humans who want to prevent wildfires, nor would such housing help us preserve our remaining “natural places” with its rich variety of wildlife. It would not promote our need for greater efficiencies in transportation, i.e., using less fossil fuel. We would far prefer “walkable communities” where we could easily get to work places, stores, schools, homes, cultural events, and public transportation. We should also promote streets appropriate for a wide variety of transportation, e.g., bikes, skateboards, pedestrians, electric busses, etc. There need to be

more emphasis on “infill” -- building affordable, single or multi-unit housing between and above current urban spaces rather than on urban sprawl

To further such environmentally friendly Smart Growth, we need to strongly encourage *moderate* politicians to join our more progressive leaders in ensuring that our statewide CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) continues to get the *green light* (so to speak). CEQA ensures local control of housing, parking lots, protection of wetlands and other nature, etc. Too many want politicians to promote large scale housing projects that benefit developers and those wanting expensive housing (often in the urban-rural interface) rather than helping those needing affordable, infill housing. Again, CEQA ensures that decision-making by locally elected leaders takes precedent over decisions by developers.

Good news? Chico’s progressive city council has voted, thus far, not to support a Assembly Bill (AB 430), that would steam roll housing development in Butte County and Orland in Glenn county -- by eliminating CEQA and its local control for several years. But pressure is on the Chico City Council, the counties, other city governments, as well as politicians in Sacramento to look as though they are helping the distraught citizens of Paradise and nearby communities who were burned out of their housing. The idea seems to be that housing would be built more quickly if there is no CEQA review. But AB 430 does not allow sufficient local decision-making regarding where single and multi-unit housing should be built. Nor does AB 430 address the infrastructure issues in terms of costs or locations. Moreover, the mayor said that nearly all the permitting has now been properly okayed to ensure housing for more than 10,000 people-- in Chico alone. The mayor added that if new housing is built without adequate local review shouldn’t it come with state support for fixing and building infrastructure, such as nearby roads, sewers, school room, etc.? Such monies aren’t a part of this bill.

We need more housing in several parts of the 5 Yahi counties, but we must allow locals to live up to the old slogan: No way San Jose! May we work to support that, and not allow the abandonment of CEQA to become a precedent here or elsewhere in the state.

Recreation vs. Resource Extraction

Alan Mendoza, Yahi Outings Coordinator

Domestic oil, gas, timber and coal extraction has long been touted as a major source of economic growth for our economy and jobs. Outdoor recreation spending, however, has become a much bigger industry, now accounting for over \$670 billion annually according to the Federal Bureau of Economic Analysis versus less than \$350 billion for resource extraction. In addition, outdoor recreation spending for activities like birding, hiking, bicycling, hunting, fishing, skiing, camping, rafting and ecotourism is growing nearly one and half times as fast as the overall economy. A Utah member of congress found this out recently when his proposal to sell off public lands was quickly shot down by a combined outcry from outdoor supporters from all political perspectives.

Outdoor recreation spending on preserved public lands also, unlike much resource extraction, is

on-going every year. Once a mountain top is removed for coal mining it loses all its economic value, while a wilderness area or state or national park generates income every year. In the Yahi Group's area we see increasingly more spending and tax dollars coming in annually from our natural wonders like Feather Falls, Eagle Lake, Bidwell Park, the Pacific Crest Trail, Gray Lodge, the High Lakes, Bucks Lake and Lake Almanor. North Table Mountain, which now attracts many foreign visitors as well as people from all over Northern California, will soon have its parking lot doubled in size and formal hiking paths put in by Fish and Game to manage the crush of people and protect the flowers.

Putting more effort and money into trails, campgrounds, recreation infrastructure, secure annual funding and acquiring more public lands is especially good business for rural economies such as ours and wise use of our tax dollars. In contrast, our government has to subsidize many resource removal activities in our national forests, like cattle grazing and timber, in addition to giving huge depletion allowances to the coal, gas and oil industries. A good example is the difference between Montana and Wyoming. Wyoming is given a D grade in the Outdoor Recreation Industry scorecard for pro-outdoor policies because of its efforts to sell off public lands and keep unproductive coal mines open. Meanwhile, Montana is given an A and is now the highest rated of all states in pro-outdoor policies and has a much faster growing economy. The state has embraced the outdoor recreation business by hiring public access specialists, having a Public Lands Day, substantially increasing fines for anyone harming wildlife or blocking access to public lands and closely measuring and monitoring outdoor recreation spending trends. Preserving and protecting our beautiful local natural scenic areas, it turns out, is good not only for our mental well-being, but also our pocketbooks.



River Watcher:

The Matter of Moths

By Rex Burress, The River Watcher

Alongside my chair, I had left a sealed plastic container with a couple leftover Cheerios, and to my surprise a few weeks later, I noticed half a dozen trapped food moths fluttering inside!

In the world of moths, some are beautiful, and some are bothersome, especially the kind that get in cereal boxes or into a food crop. The kind that like to chew on clothes are not very welcome either, and their plain, brownish bodies are not very pretty. Actually, it's not the fluttery flying house moths that do the damage, as the adults don't even have a mouth and live only a couple weeks. They fly to look for a mate and lay eggs before dying. The hungry hatched larvae are the culprits.

There are several species of 'Pantry Moths' in the *Anagasta* genus, and all of their larvae seek out anything grainy or nutty in the dark recesses of storage to keep the cycle going. This is not good when you find a webby cluster in your flour bin, infiltrated with the feces of the foul beast! Seal new foods in plastic, but even then the larvae can squeeze through any cracks.

Another nearby moth menace is the 'Webbing Clothes Moth,' [*Tineola bissellieta*] whose larvae

chew on your woolens! A great adaptation but bad for clothes lovers. Even though some insects are interesting and beautiful, there is a segment of insectivory whose lifestyles conflict with civilization, hence the development of poisonous chemicals. Maybe good for one side but bad for the other.

Of the estimated one million species of insects on Earth, there are about 180,000 species of Lepidoptera, or butterflies and moths, with moths accounting for 160,000 of the number. We don't see moths as much as butterflies since they are mostly nocturnal and small, but some are huge and spectacular such as the Atlas Moth of Asia. Lepidoptera also features microscopic scales on the wings laid in place like hands with fingers pointed up. The beauty of the overlapping scales stirred an Entomologist, Stennet Heaton, into some pioneering 1965 micro photography of unexpected Lepidoptera wing dimensions for the Oakland Nature Center.

There are about 11,000 moth species in North America, and 750 butterflies. California has about 3,000 species of moths and 240 butterflies. The Ceanothus Silk Moth is among the most attractive and the Black Witch [Otosema] of Southern CA is the largest, as big as a bat and has the largest wingspan of any insect in the State. So much for numbers, but the distribution of life on Earth is quite intriguing. The diversity is worthy of widespread study, and for some, collecting.

Individual moth species exhibit some outlandish characteristics. Just in CA among the 3,000, there are Greasy Cutworms, Pussmoths, Pink-margined Green, Oak Winter Highflier, Yerba Santa Bird-dropping Moth, Blackberry Leaf Skeletonizer, Skin Miners, Omnivorous Looper [inch worm], and a moth to fit every condition.

The Bumble Bee Moth, [Hemaris] flies in the daytime and hovers at flowers for nectar. The Sand-dune Grasshopper Moth is a flightless moth that runs like a lizard, hops on dunes like a grasshopper, and 'swims' into the sand at night! The larvae have very short legs and attach to the stems of plants in silken tubes under the sand!

The White-lined Sphinx Moth is another daytime moth called the Hummingbird Moth, using a long tongue two-times the length of its body to probe tubular flowers. The horned brownish larvae sometimes occurs in great hordes that devour plants. The Tomato Hornworm is related but confined to tomato leaves. Wonders never cease, and remarkable moth and insects stories abound!

*“People wrap themselves in smug cocoons/Of dogmas they believe are wise,/And look askance
at one who sees,/In worms, potential butterflies.”--Eloise Wade Hackett
“And what's a butterfly? At best/It's but a caterpillar, dressed.”*

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