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## Yahi Summer 2017 Outings and Events

*Coordinated by Alan Mendoza*

[www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yahi/outings](http://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yahi/outings)

## What One Person Can Do

*By Mary Kay Benson, Yahi Political Chair*

Hi All. My name is Mary Kay. I'm a senior citizen, retired from a non-profit (Project Open Hand in San Francisco, whose focus is feeding the needy - there's the food theme). I'm a vegetarian of 37 years, so healthy eating is my bag. I'm living on a limited income, without a car, so I am a homebody with a 17 year old rescued dog with special needs. I knew there was a lot of work to do, but with those limitations, I didn't know how much I could to make a difference. I found that there's so much I can do from home, and I hope this inspires you to take action! It's fun and feels good to take action. I didn't know I could do all that I did in 2016, and I feel self-empowered and supported as we go head first into 2017.

Now I am doing similar actions with Sierra Club and having fun doing it, waving signs, joining marches, and tabling with Wendy and others. So, for those of you who already have SC CA or any other food and water safety connections, please help get the word out by sharing some of this info with them.

I first got started locally volunteering for Bernie Sanders, mostly doing administrative work and online networking. When I could get a ride, I attended local debate parties, registered voters, and even canvassed with a friend. That friend took me to meet our Frack Free Butte County organizer and I agreed to host "Dear Governor Brown," a film produced by Mark Ruffalo, at my home. After the film screening Mark spoke to all of us by conference video. You can watch it on our website-- 25 minutes of visuals I couldn't forget. Mark told us they got fracking banned in NY, and now want to take on CA. He said that during the campaign in New York, there were good days and bad days, but they did it and he feels it made him a better human being. Well, that hit home in my heart. I'm always working on self improvement.

I wondered if I could juggle one more thing. As it happened, Bernie work stopped sooner than I'd hoped, and Measure E passed in last June's primary, banning fracking in Butte County with 72% of the vote.

Woot! Meanwhile I had been attending online conferences with Rootskeeper, organizing for Protect CA Food. I really liked these weekly short meetings. We get mentored by Rootskeeper's leaders, David Braun, another hero in the movement to ban fracking in New York, now living in his home state of CA, and Jessica, who is a whiz kid in my book. And, of course the other volunteers-- we teach and learn from each other.



Rootskeeper and Protect California Food encourages our input and creativity. We brainstorm and choose an easy action to do each month or so. We started with gathering petitions signatures, then we planned a day of action. We went to our location of choice, grocery stores, farmers markets, to tell people about the issue and get them to sign our

petition. While tabling for Bernie at a grocery store, I found that people were focused on their shopping, so I chose the local library. There were children's events happening there, and I figured Mom's and kids were the people I wanted to reach. Plus, people go to libraries to read and learn. A volunteer graphic artist did a fact sheet for us. I emailed the local progressive newspaper, and they came and wrote a nice story about us. I recruited one other volunteer, and got 39 signers in 2 hours. It was fun. [Here's the article](#). There were several groups doing this around CA that day. My favorite picture is of these darling kids.

As you can see from our website, there are 12 groups in our coalition, and counting. Altogether that month we collected over 350,000 signatures. That led to our next action the following month-- delivering those petitions to dear Gov. Brown, preceded by an impressive press conference, which you can watch on our website. That also got some news coverage and made Sacramento news channels.

We also wanted to reach our local political representatives, which turned out to be harder than I'd thought. I called them all and sent emails, saying I just wanted to make them aware of the problem. Months later, I got some weak replies. It turns out where we live, in a college town blue bubble in a bucket of red, our Representatives are all in the bag for big Oil/Gas and big Ag. Fortunately, I persist. I learned I had no clout as an individual. No money means no access.

Next we all placed phone calls to Gov. Brown's office. We have not gotten a response from Jerry Brown for any of our efforts...yet.

Circling back to those legislators -- I'm going to request local meetings again, but this time I'm hoping to bring some Sierra Club members with me.

Volunteering for Bernie with See The Bern, we made and collected short video testimonials and posted them on YouTube. We got those people's videos to the top several pages of all the search engines. It seemed like an effective way of engaging people and getting our message out, so of course I wanted to do the same for PCF. That's a work in progress. A nice thing about our actions is that anyone new can keep doing any one of them via our website. I set up a Protect Our Food group on Facebook, so we could share those videos and related news stories. I put



"Our" in place of CA, to attract more people, as most in the US are eating this tainted food, because CA grows about half of all. It would be way cool if you joined us there, too. Plus you can see all my memes, like this one. Oh, by the way, I'm an artist too. I began designing memes for the local Bernie campaign, and now I'm doing it for Protect California Food, too.



Well, I figured I'd better make some business cards to hand out to all I meet anywhere. I used the picture from our Sacramento action on the front and put my name, email and phone number on the back. I waited for a 50% off sale at VistaPrint, and ordered them. It's been great to have them. Want one?



Tweet: @JerryBrownGov



Used to irrigate these food crops in California. Don't buy these brands.



Billionaire owners of Wonderful Companies water with oil wastewater & then market to children. Boycott.

Here's the handout I made on brands that irrigate with oil field toxic wastewater and market their products to children.

While writing to my legislators, I began researching and taking advantage of all the resources we have on the website. I found hundreds of other relevant agencies and organizations, and I began writing to at least one of them a week, including the CA Waterboards, other environmental advocacy groups, scientists, educators, and litigators. I take it upon myself, because healthy food is my passion. Fighting fracking is my passion. Fighting Big Oil/Gas, Big Agra and Big Chem is my passion. They all come together in Protect California Food.

I just watched PBS' "American Experience" about Rachel Carson, author of the groundbreaking Silent Spring. It struck me that we are in exactly the same place she was - again! Chemical corps scientists versus Environmental Scientists, the known toxic slurries in the "produced" wastewater of oil and gas fields, the unknown 38% of "trade secret" chemicals, wastewater that has not been independently tested, relying only on voluntary small samplings tested by the oil companies themselves, and a deficit of data on long term effects. We have a lot of work to do, but I'm confident we can do it. It's amazing how much one person can do. Won't you join me?



## **Yahi Group News**

*By Suzette Welch, Yahi ExCom Chair*

We have had a few changes in the Yahi ExCom. Mary Kay Benson is no longer an ExCom member but she will continue to be the Political Chair. Wendy Le Master was appointed by the Board to be a member and will also continue to be our Outreach Chair. Ernesto Rodriguez has volunteered to take up our new position of Youth Activities Chair.

We are pursuing a change to the Yahi Group bylaws which will enable us to have more ExCom members. This will translate into having more people to help with the club activities. Bylaws now read that the ExCom will be made up of 5 members. The ExCom voted to change the number to 7 members. This change needs to get National SC approval and then will be presented to the Yahi membership for a vote as part of the December election.

There are three new volunteers who are going through the process of becoming Outings Leaders. We are happy to have Wendy Le Master, Ernesto Rodriguez, and April Grossberger moving towards being able to lead hikes. They will enable the Group to offer a larger variety of outings.

Yahi ExCom voted to send a proposal to the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission that the upper park road beyond Bear Hole remain closed to vehicular traffic except for emergency vehicles. There needs to be an area of the park that is available for bikers and hikers to enjoy nature without the intrusion of motorized vehicles.

There is a very nice Sierra Club display in the Chico Branch Library, 1108 Sherman Ave. in Chico. The display will remain in the upright case and table top display case for the month of May. The display, which tells of the many activities of the Yahi Group, was produced and put up by our Outreach Chair Wendy Le Master, ExCom member Jane Coleman and Youth Activities Chair Ernesto Rodriguez. So stop by the library and check out a book or one of the documentary videos donated to the library by the Yahi Group and take some time to see the display.

Celeste and Dave Garcia have once again held their annual fundraiser - Bird and Brunch event. Participants enjoyed a delicious brunch and got to go birding with two expert guides. The Garcia's property had a vast number of resident and visiting birds to discover and enjoy. The event participants donated a total of \$386.00 to the Yahi Group. We are very thankful to the Garcias for putting on this event.

Generous donations were made to the Yahi Group by Bonnie and Eugene Moffett, and Marcia Moore in the name of Dr. Robert Johnson. Laura Grossman made another very generous donation to the Group this year.

Club members participated in the Women's march, Science march, and People's Climate march. These activities took place in Chico, Sacramento and we had one participant in Washington DC. Other political activities that the club has been involved in include Facebook postings of actions that are needed and tabling at the Snow Goose Festival, Community Environmental Gathering, Science Rally, Endangered Species Fair and monthly appearance at Chico Farmers market with the plans to rotate around to other markets.

## Conserving While Evolving!

By Grace Marvin, Yahi Conservation Chair

Under the current US President, environmental concerns and lawsuits have been sparked all across the country. Concerns are many, including increasing the size of the wall that *physically* separates us from Mexico, climate change, oil drilling off and on shore, decimation of national parks, and construction of unnecessary dams. Therefore, we are thrilled that more people are joining the five county Yahi Group – mirroring the nationwide growth of the Sierra Club. Persons of all ages are seeing that we have to fight more than ever to protect local, nationwide, and global natural resources.

Lassen National Park in our region may acquire more roads for OHV (off highway vehicles) unless enough people show resistance to such efforts that harm the peace and preservation of nature.

Meanwhile, the Oroville Dam disaster earlier this year has generated much righteous anger from hundreds of thousands who have been dramatically affected by the release of water down two problematic spillways. It is noteworthy that Ron Stork of the Sierra Club and Friends of the River had called attention to defects in the dam's spillway construction in a 2005 lawsuit, which was ignored by the state. (One can Google the *Sacramento Bee*, *Chico Enterprise Record*, and news around the world, about the crises



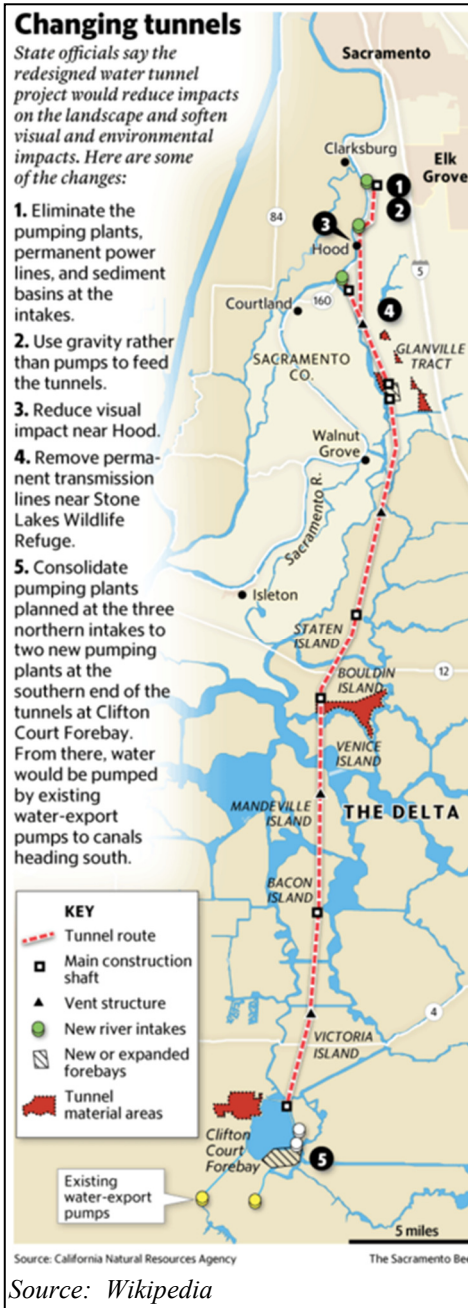
View of Oroville Dam's main spillway (center) and emergency spillway (top), February 11, 2017. Source: Wikipedia

involved with our country's highest dam, *i.e.*, Oroville Dam which was built in Butte County 1962-1967, opened in 1968.)

Speaking of water, throughout California, we encourage more of the public to participate in decision-making processes of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in their/our own counties. Serious problems abound when some of the most powerful water districts get to take charge of our water! Another statewide and local issue involves the dangers from transport of oil by rail in our mountains and near dams and waterways; sister organizations have been particularly vocal here, and we supported them, also, when they promoted recent local Science and Climate marches.

We are seeing more activism among our group's members. For example, at the May 2, 2017, Chico City Council meeting, several advocated for much more care of park and city trees than

the current budget is proposing. Not only are dead and dying trees dangerous to people; when they fall, they are much more costly to the city than if trees had received proper care, e.g., pruning. Moreover, people are concerned about large trees that are being removed for development purposes.



Many more of our citizens are supporting local and statewide candidates who, also, maintain positions supported by the club. These include stopping the “Water Fix” i.e., the new name that proponents for the twin tunnels have given to the states' investments in moving much more water from Northern to Southern CA. We also urge candidates to support policies reducing carbon dioxide emissions, infill housing projects and walkable cities, ecologically preferable alternatives to dams, sustainable energy fuels and lifestyles, and even access to birth control.

Local members are joining in several of the efforts of Mobilize and Indivisible groups, Butte Environmental Council, and the Chico Peace and Justice Center. Younger members attending Yahi meetings are making concerted efforts to get other young people (elementary school to college age) involved with fun and conservation activities promoted by our club. Reaching out to those who aren't typical members is very important not only for the club but to generate dialogue that will let citizens know they are being heard by conservation-minded people. Thus in early May several activists joined in a meeting of residents of Chapmantown, a truly diverse, charming, and welcoming community south of Chico. We met with Chico and Butte County leaders. We wanted to know if annexation of Chapmantown by Chico will address deleterious circumstances they have experienced, including dangerous amounts of trash, fast drivers, rodents, and pollution caused by unwanted industry. Many also wanted to know if they will have to pay more for city services than many can afford.

As we have seen throughout our cities and counties, excessive inequality results from lack of opportunities of all kinds and from inadequate or missing services to address health, food, housing, safety, and transportation needs (among others). The November election showed that many do not believe politicians or other people care about

or even want to enter into dialogue with them. They/We include many people of color, refugees, impoverished, and economically stressed people of all kinds who are especially affected by environmental injustice. Let's help our club evolve by better listening and by seriously addressing environmental injustice and the increasing harms to our planet in these truly revolutionary times!

**Sunstock Solar Festival:  
March and Rally Against the Use of Oil Wastewater to Irrigate Food Crops**

*By Mary Kay Benson, Protect CA Food Project*



I have been working exclusively on this project, the Sunstock Solar Festival, as part of the Protect CA Food project. We couldn't find a single CA legislator to sponsor our legislation bill to stop oil wastewater from watering our food crops and livestock or stop it from being dumped into our groundwater and aquifers, because most politicians are taking big donations from Big Oil/Gas, Big Agra and Big Chem.

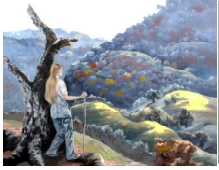
I have arranged a bus on 5/20/17 to take people from Redding -> Chico -> Sacramento and back. If you want to buy a ticket for below cost or if you want to volunteer/work you can ride free. Also there are donated scholarships

for which you can apply. There will be 10 buses from all over CA as well as carpooling caravans. If you can't go to Sacramento, there is a petition on Yahi Group Facebook page which you can sign.

Our March will be nonpartisan, Indigenous peoples blessed and led from Governor's mansion to the Democratic Convention 3 blocks away, during their lunch break, and back again. Our Rally will be solar-powered music and speakers. It is an honor to volunteer with these inspiring young knowledgeable organized activists as well as the seasoned veterans. They sure give me hope, and we elders are really appreciated here, too, for our wisdom and our experience. We all bring different skill sets, energy and creativity to the table, and we have a statement of values to guide us in our interpersonal interactions. It's been a completely positive energy experience for me. And I feel really good standing up and being counted. I find action is the best antidote to despair.

**Summary:** The focus of the campaign will be to push elected officials (and ultimately Governor Brown) to demonstrate that they care more about lives (and public health) than lobbyists, and will protect California's people and food from toxic oil and gas development. We will push them to formally pledge not to accept contributions from the oil and gas industry and to prioritize public health over the profits of the industry.





## River Watcher: **Bigfoot Lives On?**

By Rex Burress

Although the Bigfoot legend has pretty well been laid to rest after 50 years of watching and searching, there will always be believers in monsters and the supernatural.

People love their monster-mysteries as it stirs certain juices and lifts the imagination out of routine living that is often prone to produce problems and dread. It doesn't take much to distort truthful imagery into the realms of fantasy, hence we have Godzilla, Star Wars, UFO's, Picasso's, Yeti's, Fairies, Bigfeet, abstracts, and aliens, which is not all bad as the stimulation stirs creative passions that adds to the fun and joy of life.

New species of plant and animal life are still being found, but large, visible creatures have mostly all been found we think. A large animal is hard to hide in this age of several billion people on earth, and ape-sized creatures need living space, food, and a family-base for reproduction. To survive, a Bigfoot would require a mate and babies, a shelter, and sewage disposal, and who has found all that? Might it be imagined, or fake, imagery? Scientifically, it would seem so, unless Bigfoot is an alien dropped onto earth to check things out!

At the most meager clue, the imagination of man can take a mighty leap forward for mankind! Witness all the treks to find lost gold mines, delving into the rubble of ancient cities, opening King Tut's tomb, and the most imaginative venture of all-- probing the universe for discovery of strange new worlds!

The NASA pictures of the Mars expedition has stirred up some incredible and outlandish imaginings of artifacts on the planet! People want so hard to believe there was life there/IS life there, that theories have gone wild. If you stare at an odd-shaped rock for awhile, you can see a face, animal, or alien! In the beginning, earth was flat—and is still flat, according to some “observers.” Be wary when considering the observations of witnesses. Even Yogi Berra chimed in: “We make too many wrong mistakes.”

As an example, a few years ago there were rumors of a mountain lion at the edge of Oroville. Near my home there is an undeveloped 80-acre wooded tract that was occupied by caretaker Richard, and he was concerned. As a fun thing, I made a few cat tracks in the road dust—and Richard found them and responded excitedly. “The lion is here—I saw its tracks!” Be wary of practical jokers, too!

Imagination is put to good use by novel, science fiction, and ghost story writers, and it's also put to good use by artists and creative inventors. But it strains the logical molecules when some of the UFO/alien stories are stretched to the extreme. The TV program, “History Channel,” occasionally runs a series on “Ancient Aliens,” and their “history” of colorful information can be quite convincing that the indescribable lives or has lived!

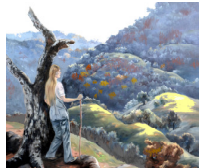
Maybe the ultimate in allegations of alien presence on earth was the channel's recent description of an alien city two miles down under the Antarctica ice! It was maintained that during World War II Hitler and the Germans had a keen interest in an alleged power grid emanating from under the ice, and they sent a large ship to investigate a possible supernatural power that could help them win the war! Amazingly, America has also done even more exploration for a sunken city two miles under the Antarctica ice! The program indicated reports of 'flying saucers' bursting from the ice pack! The good old UFO! The research has all been classified in an eerie silence...like the Roswell, New Mexico saucer incident.

Maybe Bigfoot comes from down under piloting a UFO! Of course, civilizations have been described in inner earth earlier. Before it was found to be exceedingly hot down there, a number of stories involved "Journey to the Center of the Earth!"

Through all the irregularities and theories-- Bigfoot, aliens, sunken cities-- keep watching. Exploration and discovery is the essence of understanding nature!

*"What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."*  
--Jesus, Holy Bible, Mark 13:37.

*"The inclination to believe in the fantastic may strike some as a failure in logic, or gullibility, but it's really a gift. A world that might have Bigfoot and the Loch Ness Monster is clearly superior to one that definitely does not."*  
--Chris Van Allsburg



**River Watcher:**

## **Tales of Foxtails**

*By Rex Burress*

Suddenly it seemed that spring was almost gone on April 6, 2017! Cool rain started falling in the morning as if the season was reverting to winter. But summer was indicated by the quick development of grass stems loaded with seeds that were waving in the wind after several days of heat as if they feared loss of surface moisture.

Suddenly the wild oats and foxtail grasses were ready to go! "Go" means to disperse to greener fields by sticking sharp spiny seedpod-barbs into animal fur or human clothing and riding along to new growing grounds!

Foxtail the plant is especially well-modified to catch onto dogs and animals passing by, and think of the fox-mammal with their long bushy tails going through a weed-patch to which they are bound! Yet, grass seeds seem to never be found stuck to the fox's lush fur. I suspect they spend a lot of time grooming their tail! Calling a prickly weed a foxtail is rather disrespectful to a fox so endowed with such a splendid tail.

Dogs are less self-reliant than wild fox, and it's up to the dog owners to extract those vicious barbed spines that are as tenacious as porcupine quills, and so cleverly designed that it humbles the human inventor. Some serious cases need a vet like Dr. Walker in Chico.

Ticks, stick-tights, and stab-seeds are the bane of the trailside. A riotous array of other non-grass plants also lurk to hitch a ride, and many feature the velco principle of attaching sticky seeds to animal legs for transportation into the future! Most obnoxious are the B-B-sized round stickers of the bur-chervil [*Anthriscus caucalis*] weed that hang on by the dozens. What starts out so lovely and fern-like dries up into obnoxious stems laden with hundreds of equally unobtrusive barbed pods.

If you step off the trail to check out a flamboyant poppy, you may suddenly notice a squadron of bur seeds clinging to your pant legs. If you try to brush them off with your hand, you will be impaled by invisible zingers as persistent as jumping Teddy Bear cholla cactus! The only consolation is that you aren't stabbed like being impaled with the spears of foxtail!

The stick-weeds and poison oak make a gallant stand to keep people on the trails to avoid flattening wildflowers and wild things. Stay on established trails when you can, to keep some semblance of wild in wild. Otherwise, walk softly and carry a big stick! [Helps to keep you from falling in the flowers!]

Foxtail grasses involve more than the one species, including about 100 species of foxtail millets of genus *Sataria*. Other grasses known as foxtail include foxtail bromes and foxtail barley, with the barley species, *Hordeum murinum*, being one of the main local dog agonizers. All told worldwide, there are about 12,000 species of grasses, mostly featuring dispersal by adhesiveness.

However, there are many more types of Epizoochory plant species besides the nasty bur-chervil that boosts its alien presence all along the riverside and around the Feather River Nature Center. The cocklebur also is found there, looking for a ride, and all plants scheme and plan on how to achieve dispersal success.

Of about 6,300 native plants in California, about 2,050 are found in Butte County, with about 25 per cent non-native. Included are about 630 species of grass in CA, second to Texas [681] as the most grassy state in the nation.

*"I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars."*  
--Walt Whitman

*"Knowing trees, I understand the meaning of patience. Knowing grass, I can appreciate persistence."*  
--Hal Borland

# YAH! Club Information

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## Newsletter Information

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For submissions, comments, or inquiries, contact Louise Casey, 872-9159, [YAHInews@comcast.net](mailto:YAHInews@comcast.net). 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.

*Yahi 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 Yahi Group.

# The Last Word

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