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Yahi Group Newsletter

Butte, Colusa, Glen, Lassen, Plumas & Tehama Counties

January, February Volume VI, Issue IV

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Yahi Group Notes

Bidwell Park Trail Maintenance

Sponsored by Parks Department

First Saturday of each month: December 1, January 5 (2002), February 2, and March 2, 8 a.m. to noon - Help maintain trails in Upper Bidwell Park. Suitable for all ages and a good way to learn more about the trails in the Park. Volunteers should meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot located on the east side of Horseshoe Lake in Upper Bidwell Park. Gloves, tools, training and beverages are provide by the Parks Department. Wear sturdy shoes or boots (and appropriate clothing if the weather is inclement). Rain cancels. For more information, contact Steve Hogue at the Parks Department, 895-4758 or shogue@ci.chico.ca.us

Conservation

Life and Death Drama

by Rex Burress

Out in the garden jungle in our backyard, gardener [and spouse] Jo discovered a duel to the death among the corn stalks. A praying mantis and a hornet met in a grim encounter "face to face" in the initial confrontation.

I was summoned to "see something I would never see again," and by the time I got there, serious business had begun. The praying mantis is the grim reaper among insects, holding those innocent looking hands in praying position but not in reverence; it is ready to pounce, and most victims are locked in its grasp and quickly dismembered by that scalpel-like set of jaws. But this time it couldn't get into position in a curious combat of the tall thin giant and the heavy-set hornet.

It was apparent that the mantis had its hands full. The hornet wisely got on the backside and its extra weight sent them tumbling to the ground. Soon mantis legs began falling to the ground, plucked off with surprisingly sharp hornet



snippers, and a nice chunk of meat was excised by the black and yellow winner. Finally, it was lift-off time, and slowly the hornet gained

*Praying Mantis.
Photo by Gene Whitaker,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

altitude with its load, much like a space-rocket blasting off from earth, gained the stalk-tops, and zoomed out of sight with its booty.

"Maybe we should have interfered to save the mantis," I said.

"Then we wouldn't have known what would happen," Jo replied.

Does it make any difference that one praying mantis is dead? Will any kind of balance be affected? Maybe that was the female mantis I plucked off my auto tire and tenderly transferred to the garden a few days previously. Her death means 150 or so fewer new mantises from the egg cases.

What about the hornet? Did that chunk of mantis body mean something special back at its home, where baby hornets might depend on that nourishment? In some cases, after hatching, hornet larvae feed on meat cached in the cell cylinders. Biological processes thrive on minute details.

For all the creatures of the grass root jungles and tropical rainforests, death is an imminent possibility. Maybe that is part of the intense alertness shown in most animals; a predator or other peril may pounce on a living creature at any minute. Imagine the fear of the fly that the mantis eats...if an insect has any perception of fear of death. Or the fear that a mantis might be found by a hornet! All we really know is that life is considered important by most living things, and protected in many examples of defense, concealment, flight, and disguise. Death might be just around the corner, but there is effort to live right to the end.

The other morning I walked through the meadow where Arlo Tobey had walked his two miles daily for 18 years, and it seemed strangely empty after he suddenly died a couple weeks ago. "No steps on the morning soil; no tracks left in the dust." He had made considerable effort to extend life by medical processes, and although he succeeded in avoiding snake bites, falling off a cliff, being eaten by a mountain lion, hit by an auto, or other accidents he had learned to avoid by experience, a biological function stopped the heart at age 84.

He was undoubtedly more acutely aware of The Impending Cut-off than the praying mantis, but both their life sparks dropped into the minus column. There will be replacements. The song of life is that, as Robert Frost said, "Life goes on," and replacements will again balance the books. Not exactly the same, but similar as far as gene and species control will allow.

The disturbing item, for those who "in the love of nature" cherish a variety of species on earth, is that many species are destroyed completely, and once a species gene bank is gone, it will never be replaced. The American government made a gallant effort to protect our environment by establishing the Environmental Protection Agency, and an equally commendable effort to save species through the Endangered Species Act, wisely realizing that future benefits might be derived from some seemingly insignificant animal or plant, and that future generations might find delight in the mere presence of something like a praying mantis.

Environmental protection legislation is constantly being attacked by landowners and corporations seeking a profit from natural resources. There is little sympathy for a mere beetle or fish when a way of life and livelihoods are blocked by the Endangered Species Act. People come and go, but for an entire species that goes down to extinction, there is no tomorrow. Once gone, there is no regrouping for another attempt down the line. Earth has lost a lot of species, some by environmental disasters, and others by manmade interference, and it behooves the intelligence of mankind to manage earth in a manner that strives to protect resources and species.

Tough questions

Survival and progress issues are constantly on the burners, and one big one of the Summer of 2001 has been the water war in the Klamath Lake water district. The tragedy is that drought conditions have decreased the water supply for all, and the question is, "Should the ranchers use the last of the lake supply, or should endangered fish species have it?" There are many connecting issues that a lack of water will affect. The complex interconnections also imperil waterfowl and eagles, frogs, and an entire habitat. Should the ranchers who moved into the area and bought land have priority? The wildlife was there first. Who owns the water?

An Endangered Species What about the Shortnosed Suckers?

by Mike Smith

The article by Rex Burress spoke of the controversy over water use in the Klamath Basin. One of those endangered species is the shortnose sucker. Here is the information on that fish from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:



*Shortnose Sucker:
Photo by Rollie White,
U.S Fish and Wildlife Service*

"Even though shortnose suckers (*Chasmistes brevirostris*) can live as long as 33 years, attain a length of 20 inches, and were once so abundant that canneries were built to package them for human consumption, the species now is federally listed as endangered. The remaining shortnose suckers live in quiet lake waters most of the year and migrate up fast-moving streams in the spring to spawn. Once, 350,000 acres of wetlands and floodplains protected the quality and timing of water entering their ecosystem. Alterations of natural streamflows by humans have reduced the reproductive success of shortnose suckers by as much as 95 percent. Even though a shortnose sucker can disperse as many as 46,000 eggs while spawning, no significant recruitment of young into the population had occurred in the 18 years before the species was listed."

Friendly Energy Sources

by Sharon Fitch

The idea of running an economy on clean renewable energy has been regarded by most people and by the U.S. government as an idea that only dreamers would take seriously, but technology is rapidly catching up with the dreamers.

The summer, 2000, issue of *Nucleus*, the magazine of the Union of Concerned Scientists, featured an article entitled "Alternate Routes", in which Michelle Robinson described the advances being made by various European cities toward developing public transportation systems that use renewable energy. Oslo, Norway, was hoping to be running entirely on renewable energy by 2002. The basis for this conversion will be cars and buses powered by fuel cells - vehicles that are currently being produced.

Fuel cells generate electricity by an electrochemical process similar to a battery. They produce electricity continuously, as long as a fuel and an oxidant (air) are supplied to the system to heat the system. One of the main advantages of fuel cell technology over petroleum-based technology is that fuel cells have been designed to run on renewable fuels. Also, because electric power is produced by a chemical process, and combustion is not used, only very low amounts of nitrogen oxides are produced, and sulfur emissions are virtually eliminated.[1]

A number of major corporations are studying fuel cell systems that use hydrogen as fuel, including DaimlerChrysler, Ford, General Electric and Dupont. Royal Dutch/Shell has also bought into hydrogen technology. Using hydrogen as a fuel has the advantage of not producing carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas. Instead, hydrogen reacts with oxygen to form water[2].

The thought of cars driving around with hydrogen in their tanks is admittedly rather unsettling. It brings to mind those horrible pictures of the last moments of the Hindenburg. However, a 1997 study found that the Hindenburg's exterior was painted with chemicals used in rocket fuel. The fire was most likely caused by static electricity igniting those chemicals. Apparently hydrogen dissipates so rapidly that the risk of explosion while filling a tank is "practically nil". Nonetheless, work is needed to establish safety standards [3].



Wind Farm:
Photo by Warren Gretz,
National Renewable Energy Laboratory

Another rapidly developing source of low-cost renewable energy is wind power. Currently wind provides less than 1% of America's energy, but research by the U.S. government shows that the wind could supply as much as 20% of our energy needs using currently available technology. Also, the cost of generating electricity using windmills has dropped from 38¢ per kilowatt-hour to

4¢ per kilowatt-hour today, which compares favorably with the average retail price of electricity in the U.S., which is currently 8¢ per kilowatt-hour[4].

There is concern that wind can not provide a reliable source of continuous electricity. Remember though that the electric power grid is huge. Electricity is constantly being fed into the power grid from many power plants in various states, and PG&E of Sacramento can buy electricity from power plants in other states. When is the wind not blowing anywhere along the Pacific Coast? The Great Plains is another area that has a wealth of wind energy. Also, power companies can build excess capacity in anticipation of days when there is not much wind.

To help meet peak electric demand during business hours, excess electric energy at night can be used to run electric current through water to produce hydrogen, which can then be used to power fuel-cell generators. (International Fuel Cells, Inc, is now producing a commercially available 200kW fuel cell power plant that is currently being used to power schools, hospitals, military installations, data processing centers and other facilities. The president of the company claims that it could also be used to supply electricity to 150 homes.)[5]

Solar Panels Installed.
Photo by Bill Eager, NREL.



In addition, solar power can be used to help meet peak electric demand during business hours, especially in the hot summer afternoons.

America's domestic supply of fossil fuels is dwindling. In the wake of the September 11 attacks, one can not help but conclude that it is foolish to rely on the countries surrounding the Persian Gulf to supply our energy needs. We are finding that environmentally friendly sources of energy are also strategically friendly. Now a writer *Fortune Magazine* is dismayed to find that the federal sup-

port for research in hydrogen technology is a mere 0.14% of the Department of Energy budget, and even that was scheduled to be cut in half.

Given the strong political influence of the petroleum industry, it will be necessary for us to be vocal to bring these new technologies into fruition.

[1] "**Fuel Cell Power Plants**", *Encyclopedia of Electronics and Electrical Engineering*.

[2] Stipp, David, "**The Coming Hydrogen Economy**", *Fortune*, 11/12/2001, p. 90.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Lavelle, Black, Salter, "**Wind-Power Revolution**", *U.S. News & World Report*, 11/12/2001, Section: Money & Business.

A Wonderful Life

a letter from Jerry Novotny

[ed. When we sent Jerry a certificate recognizing his 25 years of active membership in the Sierra Club, he sent back a letter detailing some of his experiences. I found this letter very interesting and asked Jerry if we could share portions of it with his friends in the Yahi Group. The following is printed with permission.]



Jerry writes:

In the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II, we would intone an old barracks room ballad, which declared, "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away." Well, this old, former soldier is beginning to fade away. It first became apparent about two months ago when, after doing work in

the yard, or even walking our new dog I would have to stop and wait until I caught up with my breath.

I went to see my doctor, who had me exposed to a long series of tests at Feather River hospital, most of which I failed. I'm scheduled to take more tests, but, regardless of the results, I have no regrets; I have led a long, useful [life]. This 83 year old body, which has served me well, is finally breaking down.

During the war, I was privileged to serve our Country from 1942 to 1945 in overseas combat zones. For 2 years as a flight engineer with the legendary Flying Tigers of the 14th Air Force. I also participated in the November 1942 invasion of French North Africa and after that campaign

was victoriously completed in Italy. From there, our 92nd Fighter squadron was shipped, via Egypt, where I climbed the pyramids and rode camels, to Bombay, India, then Calcutta, and over the Hump (the Himalaya Mountains to China), where I was transferred to the 322nd Troop Carrier squadron as a mechanic, electrical specialist and flight engineer, and was awarded an Air Medal.

At the end of the war, I was returned to the States, and discharged at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, on Oct. 12, 1945. That same evening, I departed for Cleveland, Ohio to visit Helen Vajgl, a former girl friend, who I had not seen for 11 years, but who had been a weekly correspondent for the last year while I was in China. The next day I proposed marriage, she accepted, we were married on Christmas Eve in Chicago and she has been my loving, understanding, and helpful wife for over 55 years.

In the summer of 1946, we relocated to California and it has been our home ever since. Under the G.I. Bill, I registered at one of the finest schools, the University of Southern California, and earned my teaching credential in 1949. For the next 33 years, I pursued the teaching profession. I retired in 1986, but continued teaching for two more years as a day-to-day substitute also a pleasant experience. Even now, many of my former students and I exchange letters and cards each Christmas.

We moved to Paradise in 1983, and have lived here happily for 17 years, in our home on a 3/4 acre plot. Earlier, when health permitted, I enjoyed leading 8 mile hikes along the flumes.

In 1990, the Board of Directors of Paradise Irrigation District (PID) announced its decision to harvest the trees around Magalia Reservoir; since I am a member of the Sierra Club, residents began calling me asking what I'm going to do about it. I called a meeting in the Paradise Library,

and a crowd of citizens showed up. We formed an association, "Protect Our Watershed" (POW) and I was elected president. We passed out petitions, and organized a campaign to prevent the logging. The directors rejected the petitions even though they were signed by 3,000 citizens.

Since a PID election was scheduled for the fall, POW nominated Gaylene Hurley and Primo Incerty to run for the Board, and they won handily. Recognizing the sentiment of the community, one of the incumbent directors moved that the logging be canceled -- and the forest still stands.

The following year, because of fiscal problems, Governor Wilson announced plans to close the CCC Fire Fighting Camp at Paradise Lake. POW was asked to organize a campaign to prevent this. POW collected 10,000 signatures and 1,000 letters to the Governor,

and delivered them to the Capitol in Sacramento on a Friday. On the following Tuesday, a government committee visited the camp and arranged for it to remain active, and the Fire Fighters are still on the battle lines when needed.

In the election of 1992 I ran for office as a PID Director, and was elected, giving POW a majority on the Board. I am proud that my name is among the Directors responsible for the establishment of the state-of-the-art water treatment plant which supplies the purest water to the citizens of Paradise available to any district in the State.

Since an operation in 1996, I have limited my civic activity to the board of directors of "Friends of the Library" and, as I have for 16 years served as docent at the Gold Nugget Museum, guiding visitors and explaining the the exhibits. No medical person has indicated when or in what manner

my earthly existence will terminate, my main hope is that it is painlessly.

One of my favorite literary passages is expressed in the last stanza of William Cullen Bryant's "Thanatopsis":

So live that when thy summons comes, to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not like the quarry slave at night,
Scoured to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

So you see, it has been a wonderful life and I am very happy that you were part of it. I have no fear, or regrets that this body has reached the point of transition, as our Church of Religious Science teaches. When I ask the medics why this body, which has served me well all these years

is breaking down, they reply, "It is 83 years old."

Very Sincerely Yours,

s/ Jerry G. Novotny

How it Works: Lindo Channel

(a.k.a. Sandy Gulch)

by John and Helen Ost

[ed. Sandy Gulch is a State owned property. Over the years, residents who border the Gulch have, in some cases, treated this public land as their own. In the past several years, citizens have insisted that these encroachments be removed.. Most have readily complied as soon as the error was noted. Some, however, have asked to purchase the property and Chico city staff was instructed to ascertain if this was possible. The staff, in opinion of some, overstepped their instructions and asked that the whole of the Gulch be transferred to City control giving the bazaar reasoning that there were concerns about flooding. The flood controls on Big Chico Creek are elegant and quite satisfactory, but a bit complex, so the explanation provided by the Osts is quite useful.]



*Lindo Channel Diversion Dam showing flow control.
Photo by Mike Smith*

Big Chico Creek flows out of the mountains, down through Upper Bidwell Park, to the Five-Mile Recreation Area. During the summer, you can stand on the pedestrian bridge and see that all the water continues down Big Chico Creek, through the dam, on through downtown, the college and out to the Sacramento River.

But in the winter, when the water rises, Chico would be flooded if all the water continued down Big Chico Creek. Two dams have been built to protect Chico from flooding.

In 1965, the Army Corps completed two dams at Five-Mile. One dam limits the water that can go down Big Chico Creek and the other dam limits the amount of water that can go down Lindo Channel. A short canal called Sycamore Bypass was dug so that the overflow water could go over to the improved and leveed Sycamore and Mud creeks.

If you walk to the dam on Lindo Channel when the water is high, you can see that the dam limits the amount of that can go into Lindo Channel and forces the overflow water to go down Sycamore Bypass. When the water is raging, like it did in January of 1997, Big Chico Creek is limited to 1,500 cfs; Lindo Channel is limited to 6,000cfs (4,700 in January, 1997). They are controlled unimproved and unleveed channels. Sycamore Bypass takes all the rest (11,000cfs in January 1997). Sycamore Bypass is uncontrolled.

The result of this project is that waters flows are progressively spread among the three channels, maintaining primary flow through Big Chico Creek, but preventing flooding even under the highest flood events.

That's how it works.

Club News



Annual Holiday Dinner Sunday, December 9

- Dinner and Silent Auction
- At the Shade Tree Restaurant (across from Chico Natural Foods)
- 5 P.M. Social hour
- No Host Bar
- 6 P.M. Dinner - 4 course vegetarian meal (non alcohol drink included) only \$15
- Program: *Agrotourism: A Cyprus Experience*
- Buy tickets early - no tickets at the door
- Bring \$ for raffle, auction items and bake sale
- Call Karen (894-1369), Goody (894-3988), or Betty (345-7205) for reservations or information
- This is a fund raising event for the general operating expenses of the Yahi Group.

Award Committee Presentation Trish Puterpaugh Honored

by Betty Volker

Yahi Group of the Sierra Club is pleased to acknowledge the environmental work accomplished by Trish Puterpaugh. Trish's activism in the environment started several years ago. Trish lives in Cohasset. Seeing the damage done to the forest and the watershed got her stated speaking out on local issues. She is actively working with the Lassen Preservation Forestry Group, Chico Environmental Network, Yahi Group, and the California Wilderness Coalition. Trish works full time but still takes time to be one of those "I can do that" people at meetings. She frequently writes letters to the local papers as a proponent of the environment. Her diverse interest and conscientious stance on environmental issues makes Trish one of Yahi's heroes.

Listserv: Group Initiates Conservation Discussion Forum

by Mike Smith

The Group has started a Listserv forum to focus on conservation issues in the five county Yahi Group area. The intention is to keep the spotlight locally - when national issues are discussed, it will be the local impacts that will be emphasized. It is not necessary to be a member of the Sierra Club in order to participate.

It is expected that it will take some time for the forum to attract a large number of subscribers; at that time it is expected that the list may split into narrower topics as the subscribers decide.

For readers who are familiar with the Listserv format, please skip down below where to [subscription instructions](#) are provided. For others, let's answer the question:

What is a Listserv Forum

It is an electronic discussion group using the internet. It is sort of like email, but rather than one-to-one, it is one-to-many. The participants are called subscribers.

When someone makes a comment or asks a question and sends it to the special Listserv address, then all subscribers will see that message and any one of them can answer or respond. The subscribers can sign-on and sign-off at will.

In order to have a the discussion be meaningful, several guidelines for subscribers have evolved: Participants are asked to stay on topic. If the conversation drifts into areas outside the intention of the discussion forum, the participants might be asked to take their conversation "off-list", meaning somewhere else.

It is very helpful if the messages are brief and of limited scope. This allows others to make meaningful comment; this is intended as a discussion, not a soapbox.

Everyone needs to remain respectful and civil. Abusive language, called "flaming", is not tolerated and, if it persists, the flamer will be removed from the subscription list by the Listmom (officially known as the list owner).

How to Subscribe

You will need an internet connection and an email address. This need not be on a computer in your home; the library can provide internet access and there are several companies such as yahoo.com or junos.com who will provide an address without charge.

We have set up all the instructions on the Group's web site. Go to www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/ and navigate to the "Conservation and Local Issues" section; there you will find a link to subscription instructions and a contact point for the Listmom if there are any questions.

New On-line Membership Application

by Mike Smith

We have put a new link on the Group's website for membership applications. That link will take you to the Club's secure server where you can use a credit card to join or renew.

When someone uses the link on our web site to join, the Group receives a portion 25% of an introductory membership fee and lesser amounts for renewals.

To find the link, go to the site at www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/ then navigate forward to the "Membership" section. It is a very simple procedure.

Silent Auction Items Needed

Any items to contribute for the silent auction at the December holiday party?

This year we would like to include home baked goodies and hand made crafts - any small items that make nice gifts. We welcome large gifts also, for example, ranches, homes, weekend retreats, dinners, art work, gifts of service, ski lessons, sports equipment, just about anything.

Yahi Group rarely asks its members to do fundraising, so if you can donate please do. If you can't donate, plan to bring some extra dollars to the holiday party and join the fun of the silent auction or buy raffle tickets. Money raised at the party stays with our local group.

Please get donations to Betty before December 7. Call 345-7205 to arrange for delivery or pickup. Baked goods should be delivered to the holiday dinner on December 9.

Sierra Club Calendars

Now order 2002 Sierra Club Calendars on-line from the Yahi Group website at www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/
Purchased this way, it provides some of the funding for the Yahi Group and a 10% membership discount for you.

If you do not have web access, call Joanne Gerson, Group Treasurer, who can order for you. She is at 893-2154

Group Election Please Vote

by Mike Smith

It is, again, time to vote for the Executive Committee.

The copy of this Newsletter that is mailed to members should contain a green ballot. Please complete and mail it. If your copy of the Newsletter does not contain a ballot, please contact me at 530-343-5411.

Group Notes

by Mike Smith

In this issue, we have a little of the old, and a some of the new.

We recognize and celebrate the long service of Joe Dudak and Jerry Novotny; and we view some additions to our electronic communications.



Annual Holiday Dinner

Lots of great work is going into our annual holiday dinner. Please see the two notes on the back page: we need items for the silent auction and we need you to call ahead for your tickets. This has become a significant fund raiser for the Group and a lot of fun. Our appreciation for all the good efforts in organizing this event.

Calendars

This year we will not have calendars physically available for sale locally. We have included a link on our web site so they can easily purchased through the mail. The math is a little different: there is a 10% membership discount, but there will be a shipping charge - I paid \$5 for the shipment of one engagement calendar. The Group does receive a portion of the sale as a fund raiser if the purchase is made through our web site. I am a fan of web based transactions, but will miss the annual calendar sales at our functions - maybe next year.

Plumas County

John Showers has been chosen to represent an environmental viewpoint on the Resource Advisory Committee for Plumas County. This group will determine the allocation of Federal funds that replace those previously tied to timber sales on public lands. In John's capacity, he will be representing the interests of Yahi Group and several other environmental organizations. We appreciate John's willingness to serve on this Committee.

Forestry Committee

Our thanks to Trish and Stephen for the hard work in successfully appealing the Storrie salvage logging plan. Because of their efforts, the Forest Service will need to modify their plans to be much more sensitive to the environmental impacts of post-fire logging in these 3500 acres. If any member would like to assist in the good work of the Committee, please contact Stephen.

About This Newsletter

SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER is published quarterly in February, May, August and November by the **Yahi Group of the Sierra Club, Post Office Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927.**

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

For submissions, comments and inquiries, please write to Sierra Club, Post Office Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927 or contact the editor at 343-5411.

For advertising in the Newsletter, please call Goodie Sweatt, 849-3988.

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 email 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 of the Yahi Group.