



SIERRA  
CLUB  
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Yahi  
Group



News  Articles  Programs  Hikes and Outings  Meetings  Events

## New Dams Proposed in Roadless Part of High Lakes

A new hydropower project has been proposed on the Lassen and Plumas National Forest boundary NW of Tobin and Highway 70 in the North Fork Feather River watershed.

Ron Bingaman, of Fourever Green Energy Company based in Grass Valley, has proposed to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission several high elevation creek impoundments, creek to creek diversions, and a new penstock and powerhouse near the mouth of Rock Creek.

The Rock Creek Water Power Project (FERC project #13219) would build two small dams on upper Chambers Creek, within the Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized area of the High Lakes. On the southern boundary of that SPNM area, a portion of Upper Chambers Creek would be diverted via conduit across the saddle NW of Chambers Peak into Jackass Creek.

Another conduit would divert part of Jackass Creek down an old jeep road into Pine Creek, a tributary of Rock Creek.

Just downstream of the confluence of those two creeks a diversion structure and long water conduit, mostly in Plumas National Forest, would divert part of Rock Creek to a penstock above a proposed new powerhouse at the mouth of Rock Creek. 2.6 miles of new road is proposed from the powerhouse to that diversion structure.

East of that Rock Creek diversion, on private lands, two sizable impoundments are proposed on North Valley Creek, next to 24N04 and Concow Road.

According to the Federal Power Act new dams and diversions are prohibited on any segment of a natural watercourse which is included in (or designated for potential inclusion in) a State or national wild and scenic river system or which has been determined to possess unique natural, recreational, cultural, or scenic attributes which would be adversely affected by hydroelectric development.

Steve Evans, Conservation Director of Friends Of the River, reported that the

National Forests has not yet completed wild & scenic eligibility studies on the creeks potentially affected, but that part of this project is within the Chips Creek Roadless Area identified under RARE II, and would impact some old growth forest on Rock Creek.

Though most such preliminary permits never result in actual project construction, because of the high cost of conducting the necessary studies, F.O.R has intervened in this poorly-sited project just in case. The Forest Service has also intervened in order to remain involved in the process.

During the lightning-caused forest fires this past summer Forest Orders were issued closing the areas of National Forest affected by the fires; but though Plumas NF has lifted their closure, the Lassen NF closure, F.O. 06-08-07, south of the meridian that runs through Saddle Lake, is in effect through the rest of 2008.

This means it is illegal to even hike into the site of the proposed impoundments in the High Lakes, until 2009, unless a permitted exemption is granted. While several requests for exemption were denied to the Yahi Group Sierra Club Trail Maintenance Committee, disallowing proposed maintenance on the upper Chambers Creek trail because of hazardous conditions, an exemption was granted to Friends Of The High Lakes allowing two members to check on conditions.

FOTHL reported that logs across the 615 trail will require chainsawing to reopen it for motorcycle use, and that a dozer line could be seen angling toward Jackass Creek in a burned area below Chambers Peak.

The Lassen NF Land & Resource Management Plan standards and guidelines for the High Lakes basins require management techniques

and strategies that least alter the landscape, and that within the SPNM areas ground disturbance during fire suppression activities should be avoided or minimized.

Nevertheless, the Forest Service allowed a new dozer line to be cut about two miles north from the 616 road to Saddle Lake, though it has been rehabilitated to discourage erosion and OHV use.

We'll probably have to wait until next summer to discover whether or not fire containment lines were also bulldozed farther east in the SPNM up the upper Chambers Creek trail.

It was FOTHL which alerted me about the dozer lines and about this proposed hydroelectric project. Though they are adamant about keeping historic roads open in the High Lakes and elsewhere, FOTHL was glad to see the Yahi Group adopt a trail in the Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized section and apparently agrees that the SPNM should remain unroaded.

Now that cross-country vehicular travel has been banned on all National Forests it does make sense to me that most historic roads remain open so as to discourage overuse of those few remaining access routes and the creation of new illegal roads by those unable or unwilling to backpack a long way to enjoy the backcountry. Even hikers usually need to drive a long way to access trailheads.

I led some long hikes into the High Lakes last summer, but acquired severe blisters on my feet in doing so. I plan to post pictures of my outings at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/cedarrock>.

Yahi Group—Sierra Club  
Post Office Box 2012  
Chico CA 95927

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# Conservation in the News!

As I write this at the end of October, so much is up in the air that I wish I were up in a satellite to get a better view! We can only hope that our part of the world will improve significantly after the elections -- from officials in park districts to the White House and everything in between. It would also help if certain initiatives would pass, while others suffer impressive defeats!

In the meantime, we cannot do anything about the Governor this year and his very mixed environmental record. For many environmentalists, he was wrong in vetoing legislation such as a container ship air pollution bill, a bill to ensure that new subdivisions have adequate fire protection, a bill that would have permitted communities to develop stricter green building standards than the state has, a bill that would have increased the screening and tracking of childhood lead poisoning -- while also giving information to pregnant women about lead poisoning. There were others as well. Possibly, you already know about the *good* conservation measures he signed. If you want additional facts about environmental bills, consider going to the Sierra Club California political website: <http://www.sierraclubcalifornia.org/legislation>. May I also suggest going to this website for information about future propositions and other great environmental information!

Some good news -- not in the Yahi region but very close to us: Nestle cancelled its very large contract (one million square foot facility) to build a water **bottling plant in Mc Cloud** -- near Mt. Shasta. Members of the Sierra Club have gotten involved with this issue, so it is fine news to us that the Attorney General very strongly criticized the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIR), naming such failures as not analyzing the impact of global warming, biological impacts, baseline environmental conditions, and waste generation. Nestle is scaling back its project by more than 60% and will, hopefully, provide a far more comprehensive EIR this time. It is noteworthy that Cal Trout, Trout Unlimited, and local residents were especially active in opposing Nestle.

An exciting organization to which our Mother Lode

Chapter and the Yahi Group belong is Sierra Nevada Alliance. Its annual conference -- held at Lake Tahoe -- focused this September on *Climate Change*. Learning about what dozens of other organizations are doing to help our environment, while sharing our own progress and problems, is crucial. The guest speaker, Tom Knudson (*Sacramento Bee*) discussed his series on the scary signs of climate change in the Sierra. In that presentation and others, we learned so much more about how problems in one region, e.g., water shortages and clear cuts in the Sierra impact other regions including the Yahi Group's five counties. We also discussed and learned about possible solutions. (See [www.sierranevadaalliance.org](http://www.sierranevadaalliance.org). Since the Yahi Group is a member organization, you should be able to obtain a discount if you choose to attend next year!)

No matter what the Governor or the November 4 elections deliver to us, our Yahi members will always have regional or local environmental concerns. Yahi involvement can make a big difference in educating our fellow citizens and in putting pressure on officials to change course and. (It would be wonderful to see or to hear about more Yahi members at local planning, council and other environmentally related meetings.) Of special importance are the **General Plans** for counties and cities underway right now, as well as **mining operations, clear cutting**, and concerns about protecting our **ground water and watershed areas**. You may contact me if you need additional information on how to get involved. Sometimes, "sister" organizations are the main drivers of environmental movements. For example, the Butte County League of Women Voters is developing guidelines for the Water Element of the General Plan, the proposed content of which the our Mother Lode Chapter has already approved. Now, we need to put the pressure on the Board of Supervisors to get it implemented.

We celebrate the success in **fighting Dyer Mountain development plans** for a 4-season resort in Lassen County. The corporation that was going to build in an absolutely beautiful and pristine meadow near Lake Almanor now is bankrupt. Our Yahi Group, thanks to the funding of the Mother Lode Chapter, has been working with Sierra Watch and Mountain Meadows Conservancy to keep the meadow from becoming a mere boondoggle for developers, who gave no consideration to numerous cultural, economic, and climate factors that argue against such a project. If another developer buys the property, the Yahi battle may continue, and we will keep on top of it.

Of particular importance in Butte County is the **fate of Bidwell Park** -- one of the largest municipal parks in the nation. Many local Yahi members would like to see the park protected from recreational developments that could rob the park of its beauty and wildness. In particular, the latest Bidwell Park Master Management Plan is in its final stages, and it may or many not be approved by Chico City Council by the time this newsletter reaches you. No matter the vote, it is important to recognize that the current plan involves changes which could severely hurt the park. These changes are not in concert with a recent position the

club has taken on the park nor with stands that several individual Yahi members have taken, e.g., at meetings or in letters to the council, newspapers, etc. If approved as is, the new plan would:

- 1- Neglect the importance of Annie Bidwell's deed of the land to the city -- in which she demanded that the city "preserve, as far as reasonably possible...all of the trees, shrubs, and vines, therein, and it (the city) shall sacredly guard the same and only remove such thereof as it may find absolutely necessary."
- 2- Insert new policies allowing intensive, recreational developments, now, and for years to come, and
- 3- Would no longer require that unauthorized trails be closed.

Sierra Club members need to come out in force to fight against the above revisions to the 1990 Bidwell Park Master Management Plan. Some local activists have proposed that the following *Annie's Amendments* become a part of the new BPMMP. If you agree, please consider letting members of the Yahi Executive Committee or me know about your feelings. I can put you in touch with local activists who will be pushing for these amendments.

## Annie's Amendments

**Park Purpose/Goal:** Maintain Annie Bidwell's requirements as noted in the Deed of Conveyance as a primary consideration in all decision making related to Bidwell Park, and observe the commitment made by the City to preserve the

Park's natural resources for the enjoyment of the public, in perpetuity.

## Objectives:

1. Preserve Bidwell Park's native ecology and natural aesthetic beauty.
2. Include consideration of the conditions found in the Deed of Conveyance in all decision making related to Bidwell Park.
3. Include the historical purpose intended for Bidwell Park in Park educational materials.
4. Allow managed infrastructure for research, education, and non-intensive recreation; do not allow new facilities for intensive recreation, except within the existing footprints of areas already dedicated to such facilities.

(continued on p. 3)

## Implementation Strategies:

1. The City shall weigh all decisions affecting Bidwell Park against the goal of preserving the natural values of the Park for future generations.
2. City staff shall be instructed to advocate for the preservation of Bidwell Park's natural, aesthetic, and historical values, in their role as trustees of a public resource.
3. The City shall provide a consistent educational message that emphasizes the historic purpose of Bidwell Park and informs the public of the formally protected status of the Park's natural features.
4. The City shall annually monitor the Park for unauthorized developments.
5. City staff shall enforce closure of unauthorized developments, and rehabilitate areas degraded by such

## About This Newsletter

SIERRA CLUB YAH! GROUP NEWSLETTER is published quarterly in March, June, September and December by the Yahi Group of the Sierra Club, Post Office Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927 or 5590 Feather River Place, Paradise, CA 95969, Attn: Louise Casey.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Yahi Group of the Sierra Club, Post Office Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927 or 5590 Feather River Place, Paradise, CA 95969, Attn: Louise Casey.

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

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

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

### Submission Guidelines:

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

## Sierra Club Contacts In the Yahi Group

### General Contact

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

### Executive Committee Officers

**Chair**—Laura Grossman:  
530-893-3882 or [joebass@outrageous.net](mailto:joebass@outrageous.net)

**Vice Chair**—Marcia Toruno:  
530-589-5722 or [MarciaToruno@comcast.net](mailto:MarciaToruno@comcast.net)

**Vice Chair**—Bob Woods:  
530-893-8656 or [MathContr@aol.com](mailto:MathContr@aol.com)

**Secretary**—Norma Odell:  
530-566-1348 or [neodell@chiconet.com](mailto:neodell@chiconet.com)

### Point Persons

**Westwood, Chester, Lake Almanor, Susanville and Greenville:** Fred Binswanger:  
530-256-3197 or [sbins@citlink.net](mailto:sbins@citlink.net)

# YAH! Executive Committee Elections

Each December YAH! members can vote for people to represent them in the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the local Yahi chapter. This year, we have four candidates: Annette Carey, Dave Garcia, Jan Hildenbrand and Gudrun Sweatt.

Please take a few minutes to participate in this important process.

Read the Candidates' Statements, and show your support by clipping and submitting your ballot.

## Candidate Statements

### Annette Carey:

I have been a Sierra Club member since 1992. I have participated as an outings leader and done many hikes as well as the maintenance trip on the Mill Creek trail for four years. I also was on the board of the Yahi Singles for a year. I have recently become more active and look forward to being a part of the executive board and participating as an outings leader.

### Dave Garcia:

I've been a Sierra Club Yahi member since 1988. I recently retired after 28 years with California State Parks as a State Park Ranger. I've been a national outings service leader since 2005 and have also led local chapter day outings. I am honored that I've been asked to serve on the Executive Committee. Conservation, sustainability, and the environment are issues that have always been paramount in my life. Clean air, clean water, safe food, and a toxic free environment are family values we must all fight and strive for. In the words of Archbishop Oscar Romero " We, who have the voice, have to speak for the voiceless"; human rights issues and environmental issues go hand in hand in the protection and preservation of our environment.

### Jan Hildenbrand:

In these critical times one can't help but stress the importance of an organization like the Sierra Club. As a member for the past eleven years and now as a lifetime member who loves the outdoors and enjoys hiking, backpacking, cross-country skiing and camping, I believe that it is time for me to do my part to help with that important work.

### Gudrun Sweatt:

I have been a member of the Sierra Club since 1991. Over the years I have enjoyed being



## Yahi Group Executive Committee Ballot

**Procedure:** This year there are four candidates for the Executive Committee. Each Yahi Sierra Club member may approve the candidate or vote for a write in of their choice. The second vote check box is for dual member households. Please clip and mail prior to December 31, 2008 to:

Yahi Group of the Sierra Club,  
Post Office Box 2012,  
Chico, CA 95927

Annette Carey

Dave Garcia

Jan Hildenbrand



## Treat Yourself to a Winter Avian Adventure at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual

### Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway

January 22-25, 2009

Chico, California

- Backyard, novice, and veteran birders, as well as wildlife enthusiasts of all ages, can choose from over 60 field trips, presentations, and workshops.
- Local art can be viewed at the festival's Uptown/Downtown Wildlife Art Exhibit hosted by Avenue 9 and All Fired Up! Gallery and Ceramic Art Center from Friday, January 16 to February 7, 2009.
- In conjunction with the art exhibit, the festival's kick-off event will be the "Wildlife Art Reception" at the Uptown/Downtown art galleries on Friday, January 23.
- A festival highlight is Saturday night's "Gathering of Wings" Banquet & Silent Auction, which will be held at the Bell Memorial Union Auditorium, Chico State University with keynote speaker, Ed Harper, well-known birder, world traveler, and photographer.
- Festival headquarters will be at the Chico Masonic Family Center, where free events and activities for the whole family are held on Saturday and Sunday.

## Conservation: (cont. from p. 2) (Annie's Amendments)

unauthorized developments.

6. The City shall clearly identify existing authorized Park developments for non-intensive and intensive use including, but not limited to: trails, bike paths, roads and facilities for intensive recreation, and record these on a mapped database.

7. The City shall conduct a Park-wide inventory/assessment/monitoring program for natural resources, using qualified persons, using the management methods outlined by the document, " Designing Monitoring Programs in an Adaptive Management Context for Regional Multiple Species Conservation Plans," published by the USGS in 2004. Special emphasis should be placed on rare, sensitive species and the habitat that sustain them.

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**Don't you agree that these amendments involve principles our club *should* promote?**

## YAH! Programs: January and February 2009

By Gerda Lydon

January 8, 2009: Marvey Mueller will present a slide show about "The Forgotten Journey: The Stephens-Townsend-Murphy Saga." This is the story of the epic journey of three families moving west in 1844 on the Oregon Trail. They preceded the Donner Party and made the first successful crossing of the Sierra Nevada by a pioneer wagon party. This is one of the truly remarkable achievements in the history of the west.

February 12, 2009: Bob Woods will present a slide show on the Peter Lassen trail.

Meetings are held at the Chico Library, East 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Sherman, at 7:00 P.M. Refreshments will

## Yahi Group Outings Winter 2008/2009

**Yahi Group Cross Country Ski List.** Join our more than 75 cross-country ski enthusiasts as we explore the backcountry of Colby Meadows and Lassen Park and enjoy the groomed trails of Mt. Shasta, Royal Gorge and Tahoe-Donner. If you'd like to be added to (or updated on) our list, please contact Yahi Group Leaders: Jeanne, 899-9980 or Larry, 342-7998. All ability levels welcome.

**On-Going Tuesday Volleyball.** Join Yahi Group members and friends for friendly, co-ed volleyball every Tuesday night at 7PM at the Chapman Center (corner of E. 16th Street and B Street in Chico). Cost: \$3 per night. For those at the intermediate level with some volleyball experience. For more information, call Karen, 899-8305 or Betty, 345-7205.

### December

**Saturday, December 6 – Cross Country Ski** (grade 2, class A). We'll go where the snow is good. This is for people who own ski equipment. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$ for drivers. Call leader for meeting time and place. Leader: Larry, 342-7998, Asst. leader: Ken, 693-2134.

**Sunday, December 7 – Christmas Caroling/Pot Luck Dinner** (grade 1, class A). Let's spread some Christmas cheer to our community seniors with our sweet voices and bright smiles. Please wear something festive! Song sheets provided. Musical instruments welcome. Bring your children and grandchildren. Bring your neighbor's children! We'll practice first, carol at a few nursing homes and then return for a pot-luck dinner. Bring a dish to share, water bottle and your favorite beverage. Call to sign up and get directions, meeting place and time. Leader: Jeanne, 899-9980. Asst. Leader: Peggy, 343-9843.

**Saturday, December 13 - Bidwell Park Day Hike** (grade 2, class A). Take a mostly flat 10 mile trek along the south side of Big Chico Creek. Meet at One Mile's Caper Acres parking lot at 10:00 AM. Our walk is on paved park road past Five Mile to the upper park (via a gravel pedestrian/bike path) and ends at the golf course. We'll return to Five Mile to eat lunch and return to parking lot by 2-3 PM. Bring water and lunch, (or buy at golf course). Rain cancels. Leader: Gene, 873-1552; Asst. Leader: Carla, 891-6977.

**Sunday, Dec 14 - Volunteer Bell Ringing for the Salvation Army.** Get in the Christmas spirit by helping the Salvation Army. Spend 1 to 2 hours bringing Christmas cheer to shoppers as you ring the Salvation Army Bell and help bring in donations for the less fortunate! If we can get 4 to 8 volunteers you'll only have to spend 1 to 2 hours helping a great cause in the name of the Sierra Club. Contact leader for more details. Leader Dave Garcia 533-2357 or [rangerdave@mynvw.com](mailto:rangerdave@mynvw.com).

**Saturday, December 20 – Cross Country Ski** (grade 1, class A). An easy ski tour for all levels. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$\$ for drivers. Call leader for meeting time and place. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

**Saturday, December 27 – Cross Country Ski** (grade 1, class A). An easy ski tour for all levels. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$\$ for drivers. Call leader for meeting time and place. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

**Tuesday, December 30 – Cross Country Ski** (grade 1, class A). An easy ski tour for all levels. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$\$ for drivers. Call leader for meeting time and place. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

### January

**Thursday, January 1 – New Year's Day Hike** (grade 2, class A). Get the New Year started on the right foot (or left) by walking off some of those delectable holiday treats you've been eating since Halloween! We'll decide whether to walk 5-6 miles to the Yahi Trail or to lower park and return the same way. Dress in layers and bring water and snacks. Meet at Bidwell Park's Five-Mile parking lot (south side) at 1 PM. Return time approximately 4 PM. Rain cancels. Leader: Jeanne, 899-9980; Asst. Leader: John, 872-8258.

**Saturday, January 3 – Cross Country Ski** (grade 1, class A). An easy ski tour for all levels. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$\$ for drivers. Call leader for meeting time and place. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

**Saturday, January 10 – Cross Country Ski** (grade 2, class B). We'll go where the snow is good. This is for people who own ski equipment. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$\$ for drivers.

## Yahi Group's General Outing Information

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

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

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

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

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

**Fees and costs:** Occasionally an outing announcement will indicate a cost. Unless the announcement specifically indicates that outing is a fund raiser, the cost indicated is only that which has been estimated to cover trip expenses. **Non-Sierra Club members are asked to make a \$2 donation if attending an outing to help defray our costs for outings**

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

**Outing Waivers:** All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the liability waiver before you chose to participate on an outing, please go to

<http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/>, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

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

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

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

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

**Errors in the schedule:** If there is incorrect information in an outings announcement, please see the web site at <http://www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/> or call Skip Augur at 894-1366 to obtain a correction.

**Suggestions and Comments welcome:**

Any comments on the outings or suggestions for future ones are always welcome.  
Mail to Alan Mendoza; 6 Patches Drive, Chico, CA 95928 or e-mail [ajmendoza@prodigy.net](mailto:ajmendoza@prodigy.net).

Call leader for meeting time and place. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

**Saturday & Sunday, January 10 & 11 - Snow Shoe, Ski to Colby Meadows Yurt** (grade 1, class A) An overnight trip to the Yurt with a full moon to howl at. This 1.5 mile, mostly flat, trip is always fun. We drive just above Butte Meadows and snow shoe or cross country ski to the yurt. There is usually plenty of time to do a further trip without our packs on Saturday. Saturday evenings usually bring out cards, dice, and other games to challenge our cheating skills. Individual commissary. Leader will share stove. Even with a wood stove 0 to 20 degree bags are recommended. Heavy snow or rain cancels. Four wheel drives are good, chains are often needed. Contact John at 872-8258 or [hubhollister@yahoo.com](mailto:hubhollister@yahoo.com)

**Sunday, January 11 – Chico Bike Ride Loop** (grade 2, class A). Ride beside the Western Pacific Train tracks and CSUC campus. After lunch downtown, we'll check out some campus neighborhoods and Mechoopda Cemetery. Meet at 11AM at West Lindo Ave and RR tracks. Park on street. Helmets required and bring water and lunch money. Rain cancels. Leader: Carla, 891-6977; Asst. Leader: Gene, 873-1552.

**Saturday, January 17 – Cross Country Ski Lessons** This is for beginners and intermediates who want to improve their ski technique and fitness. Call for info on ski rentals, clothing and to make reservations. Leader: Larry, 342-7998

## Directions to Meeting Places For Yahi Outings

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

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

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

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

## Sierra Club

## Hike Classifications

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

### Distance Rating

Grade 1: up to 6 miles

Grade 2: 6-10 miles

**Saturday, January 24 - Hike Along Feather River in Oroville** (grade 2, class A) A pleasant 4-5 mile stroll along the paved, scenic Feather River Parkway to the Nature Center and back. Afterwards we will have a group lunch at Tong Fong Low Chinese Restaurant in downtown Oroville. Please bring water, comfortable walking shoes and restaurant/carpool \$\$ . Heavy rain cancels. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 9:30 AM or at trailhead in Oroville (Hwy 99 & Montgomery Street) at 10:00 AM. Leader: Alan, 891-8789 or [ajmendoza@prodigy.net](mailto:ajmendoza@prodigy.net).

## February

**Sunday, February 8 – Bidwell Park & Chico State Arboretum Walk** (grade 2, class A). A mid-winter stroll of 4-5 miles through Lower Bidwell Park to the campus-wide Chico State Arboretum. Along the way we'll discuss the history and preservation of this unique area. Rain cancels. Meet at One Mile Recreation Area in Lower Bidwell Park at 8:30AM. Leader: Alan, 891-8789 or [ajmendoza@prodigy.net](mailto:ajmendoza@prodigy.net)

**Sunday February 15 – Cross Country Ski** (grade 2, class B). We'll go where the snow is good. This is for people who own ski equipment. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$\$ for drivers. Call leader for meeting time and place. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

**Thursday, February 19 – Yahi Newsletter Folding.** Join us to prepare and sort the Yahi Group newsletter for mailing. It only takes about an hour and we always have lots of fun. Volunteers are always needed. Call 343-9277 for directions and more info.

**Saturday, February 21 – Almond Blossom Bike Ride** (grade 2, class A). A flat, leisurely 15 mile ride through orchards and pastures on quiet country roads to Durham Park for lunch and return on the Durham Bike Path. We'll stop often to admire spring flowers and smell fantastic tree blossoms. On return we may check out murals on bike path along the Midway. Meet at 10AM at the Glen Oaks Memorial Park Cemetery Office, Hegan Lane and the Midway. Helmets required. Bring water and lunch (or buy one at the Durham Market). Rain cancels. Leader: Gene, 873-1552. Asst. Leader: Carla, 891-6977.

**Saturday, February 21 – Cross Country Ski Lessons** This is for beginners and intermediates who want to improve their ski technique and fitness. Call for info on ski rentals, clothing and to make reservations. Leader: Larry, 342-7998, Asst. leader: Ken, 693-2134 .

**Saturday, February 28 - Hike the Dan Beebe Trail in Oroville** (Grade 2, Class A). We will see views of Table Mountain, Feather River Canyon and Oroville Dam. We will Start the hike from the Nature Center in Oroville then walk up/along the Feather River for about 3 hours, we will see if we can make it to the top of Oroville Dam, then back to the Nature Center. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8:15 AM and at the trailhead in Oroville at 9:00 AM. Please bring plenty of water, lunch, carpool \$\$ and sturdy shoes. Return time approx. 5 PM. Rain Cancels. Leader: Jeanne, 899-9980; Asst. Leader: John, 872-8258.

**Saturday, February 28 – Cross Country Ski** (grade 2, class B). We'll go where the snow is good. This is for people who own ski equipment. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$\$ for drivers. Call leader for meeting time and place. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

## March

**Sunday, March 1 – Paradise Lake Hike** (grade 2, class A). Enjoy the spring beauty of Paradise Lake on this 5-6 mile hike on a flat path along the lake. Bring lunch, water and comfortable shoes. Meet at 9AM at the Chico Park & Ride or at Paradise Lake trailhead

## Cross Country Ski / Snowshoe Update

*New Chico Cross Country Ski/Snowshoe information website:*

<http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/chicocxski/>

Larry Chrisman and Jeanne Woodbury have asked me to take over the XC Ski email list that Jeanne has maintained for the last few years.

Many thanks to Jeanne for starting and maintaining this valuable service for all of us who love sharing the winter backcountry experience with others (and limit our carbon footprint by ride sharing).

However, this large email list was cumbersome and time consuming to maintain, so I have decided to use the above Yahoo group site instead. Chico cycling and triathlon groups have been using these Yahoo group websites to communicate very successfully for several years now . Yahoo has good spam filters and the website allows for people to control and update their own contact information.

The site also allows members to calendar events, and send reminders as well as share pictures. (Thanks to Scott Chandler who has already uploaded an album of backcountry skiing pictures.) The site has a list of useful links to XC ski related sites and webcams and members can also upload ski/snowshoe related articles.

To provide members with a degree of protection against abuse, members have to register to utilize the site. There is a handy registration button on the home page to make joining simple. Members are encouraged to post trip reports, outing pictures and upcoming trip opportunities. Trips that are Official Sierra Club outings will be labeled as such, but members are welcome to post their own non-Club sponsored trips.

For those who are thinking about getting into cross country skiing, Larry will be offering beginner's lessons (listed on the site's calendar) several times during the season. We invite you to join us this winter for self-propelled explorations of our local snow-covered wonderlands.

## New YAH! Trail Guide

Don't forget to get your copy of the new Yahi Group Trail Guide. Cost: \$10 plus shipping if bought directly.

Contact: Alan Mendoza - 530-891-8789 or [amendoza@prodigy.net](mailto:amendoza@prodigy.net)

## Reconsider the Lawn

By John Whittlesey, Canyon Creek Nursery

We are living in challenging and interesting times, facing many changes in our lives. The awareness triggered by the environmental/ ecology movement begun in the 60's has reached a point where the consequences of our decisions are becoming clearer and more evident. We are finally becoming aware that in all facets of our lives the choices we make daily have an impact on the greater world. Whether understanding where our food comes from, limiting our use of fossil fuels or what materials we use for building, we are being forced to question more carefully how we live. A part of this examining process should involve looking at how we garden, particularly taking a second look and questioning the ubiquitous lawn which makes up roughly 20% of our urban landscape.

Maintaining a lush, green lawn is difficult to justify when considering the region in which we live. Interior northern California has an extreme mediterranean climate - a climate where rainfall is scarce or nonexistent from May through September coupled with high summer temperatures. For most grass species used for lawns, survival in this climate requires significant amounts of water. With greater competition for our limited water supplies whether from farming, increased population and requirements to satisfy the needs of fish and wildlife habitat, it makes little sense to dedicate such a precious resource so our homes can be surrounded by verdant borders of green.

Besides the excessive water consumption factor, the energy that goes into their maintenance is great. Lawns are watered and fertilized to keep them green. The grass grows and needs to be mowed, usually by a gas powered lawn mower. The pollution (noise and air) caused by small gas engines is significant. The industry built up around the idea of every home having a lawn is extensive whether it is producers of lawn mowers (a lawn mower in every garage) or chemical manufacturers advocating the use of fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, and fungicides to insure a pristine, lush, weed free lawn. None of this makes sense when considering where we live and the impact on the environment.

In place of lawn, which is often the automatic default when installing a new garden, homeowners should consider reducing the lawn size - planting with grass species that require less water, or replacing it entirely with a garden of drought tolerant plants. A beautiful garden can be planted with California native and/or mediterranean plants that require less work to maintain and use a fraction of the water. Such a garden, planted with a mix of shrubs, perennials, grasses will provide seasonal interest, be more representative of the region where we live and bring new life into the garden.

A significant benefit to removing the lawn and planting with a mix of drought tolerant perennials and shrubs is the increased habitat for wildlife. Whereas a lawn provides little habitat, a well designed, diversified garden of native and mediterranean plants can help sustain the needs of birds, butterflies, bees and a myriad of insects. With wild habitats being impacted by development, urban/suburban gardens can play a significant role in helping to maintain populations and providing corridors between these remaining native habitats.

Go out into your gardens, look around and examine what is planted and why. Keep in mind we

## Wiped Out

It is August 1 in Oroville, California, and east of the city with a heart of gold in the Feather River Canyon, fire destruction continues.

Now the flames have descended into the very heart of the wilderness walls that normally make the canyon one of the most scenic drives in America. Rich Bar, Rush Creek, Caribou, Seneca, Belden - sheer walls where conifers spire upward from the adversity of terrain, now 4,000 acres being shorn of greenery. The fire may not be contained for a month, even with helicopters forming a massive aerial attack. (And now a new "Craig" 1000-acre fire near Lake Oroville! 8-5-08)

Out of this tragic invasion of wildlands and wildlife comes a letter to the editor stating: "Get dead trees out of the forest. I've seen our forests become more heavily regulated and more full of fuel for fires. I blame environmentalists for this...They say that dead trees should be left in the forest because they provide habitat for animals. That isn't true. I've been in the woods most of my life and I haven't seen any animals living in a dead tree. Dead trees in the forest provide food for a hungry fire though."

To this former logger I ask, "What is a forest without trees of all kinds? Do we want a forest with healthy conifers only, like a tree farm?" A forest is not a forest without the balance of dead and living trees and a variety of animals and plants. Before occupation and management by mankind, forests grew with whatever dominant tree could forge a foothold...and trees dies and were left to melt back into the forest floor. If a fire did sweep through, nature simply started all over again though it might take a hundred years to re-establish.

We don't have crews going through the forest cutting all the dead trees, and brush, because it would take manpower far beyond what the world can afford - and then brush grows back thicker than ever - and new trees die in the wake of the purging. We try to limit the destruction with emphasis on human dwellings and they are buildings usually improperly built for fire country. Build with stone!!!

For the letter-writer to say he had not seen any animals living in dead trees is absurd if he had observed at all. Sometimes a person sees what they want to see, and are oblivious to associated details. Even Henry David Thoreau said, "To find arrowheads, you have to think arrowheads." Dead trees are the favorite perching places for a multitude of birds including woodpeckers, and cavity nesters/den mammals literally monopolize snaggy outgrowths.

If one looks further, you see the insect infiltration in a dead tree, and the crumbling particles that fall to the forest floor to further enrich the soil and build that buffer zone. The importance of intact woodland tracts, with their living and dead growth, becomes apparent, too, when fire actually does strip a slope of its thin veneer of woody/leafy debris that is part of a healthy forest. Already, before the Canyon fires are completely out, there is a haunting concern about erosion next winter when the rains will fall without any vegetation and basement duff to absorb the water.

*The woods are full of dead and dying*

## Clair Tappaan Lodge Fund Raiser

Besides all the fun of being at Donner Summit on a pleasant sunny August weekend, the Fourth Annual Clair Tappaan Lodge summer fund-raiser brought in \$21,000, much of it from Sierra Club chapters, groups and individuals. Contributing Sierra Club entities were the Toiyabe Chapter, Mother Lode Chapter, Tennessee Chapter, the Black Mountain Group, Sierra Nevada Group, Lake Group, Napa Outings Group, and Yolano Group.

This year's fund-raising weekend to benefit Clair Tappaan Lodge, the Sierra Club Lodge at Donner Summit, fell during a full moon. Capitalizing on this astronomical phase, Peter Lehmkuhl, general manager of the lodge, led hikes on Friday and Saturday to see Donner Peak by moonlight. Hikers were amazed that the reflection of the moonlight from the granite made the night seem almost as bright as day.

As in the previous summer fund-raisers, the organized hikes were the highlight for most of those in attendance, although Friday night's "s'mores" and brandy by the campfire in the meadow came in a close second.

Sheryl Tomboulion serenaded us during the Silent Auction on Saturday, and the rain gods graced us with clouds and breezes with only a few drops. The breezes made the afternoon event in the meadow even more enjoyable. The Napa Outings and Ski groups provided the wine for the reception, and the Milk Pail in Mountain View donated the cheese.

Our many thanks for all those who contributed, volunteered and attended this wonderful annual event. Save the dates of August 14, 15 and 16, 2009, and join

## Clair Tappaan— State of the Lodge

On Saturday night of the Moonlit Nights at Clair Tappaan summer fund-raiser, Co-Chairs Diane Boyer and Olivia Diaz presented the State of the Lodge. Diane reported that due to the new Outdoor Education programs being offered in schools in 2007-2008, 1000 students spent the night at Clair Tappaan Lodge at Donner Summit. The students and their chaperones constitute a new audience, which has bolstered our overnight stays. They helped the lodge end the month of August with a \$64,000 surplus.

Olivia told the attentive group that the State of the Lodge is good. There are a good number of reservations for the month of September, so we can confidently predict that Clair Tappaan Lodge not only will meet the challenge from the Sierra Club Board of Directors to "Break Even or Be Sold," but also will show a healthy surplus.

On behalf of the staff and the CTL committee, Diane and I want to thank everyone who has referred schools to the Lodge, our steadfast hiking and skiing visitors, all of the participants and contributors to the Lodge, and to the fund-raiser for helping us overcome many years of red ink. We must keep telling schools about the wonderful opportunities at Donner Summit for place-based outdoor education at a reasonable price.

Meeting the September 30 challenge is just the beginning. What the Clair Tappaan Lodge has to offer - a return to a slower way, a retreat from

## Following in the Footsteps

There is always a sense of loss when a renowned person dies and severs society not only from the lovable personality but from that valuable accumulated storehouse of knowledge. Such was the sad news that a former California Fish and Game manager, John Cowan, died on October 15, 2008.

John was one of those old-timers at 92, who had contributed to the understanding of waterfowl management, mostly at Gray Lodge Wildlife Refuge, plus pioneering educational trailways at Butte College. But mostly he was a man of the out-of-doors who interacted with that segment of mankind that "in the love of nature holds communion with her visible forms." Those environmentally kindred-spirits do indeed flock together, inspiring others as they teach the wildlife stories and "entice others to look on nature's loveliness with understanding."

We have the names and writings of a multitude of departed environmental contributors on whose shoulders we interpreters/wildlife workers/writers stand. We benefit from their studies and discoveries and accomplishments. The creative community does indeed borrow ideas from other environmental devotees to heighten nature interpretation and wildlife organizational

advancement, each adding a little bit to the storehouse of knowledge.

I knew some great naturalists in the Bay Area in the Lake Merritt Wildlife Refuge 1960-90 days. Paul Covel, William Mott, Josh Barkin, Ron Russo - many listed in Covel's book, "Beacons Along a Naturalist's Trail." I know Naturalist Paul was a good friend of John Cowan at a time John was helping supply wing-injured Canada geese to Lake Merritt.

Those were the important names of yesteryear. When I retired and moved to Oroville, CA, in 1993, I encountered a new set of environmental enthusiasts in that sector, but now when I look at a list of names presently active in the Bay Area, they are all new to me. I know, though, that they are new generations carrying on the cause of conservation advancement.

Thus it is that individual efforts, small and large, keep the mainstream of nature interest going. I think of Dana Mortenson when I recall outstanding naturalist interpreters. Dana was an elderly nature hike guide in Yosemite in the 1970s, and I was so impressed at his fine use of words as he talked to large audiences, pointing a

wise finger to emphasize a point in a delightful way to engender enthusiasm. Although he wrote a book on Yosemite wildflowers, he had no national claim to fame, but was just expressing his inner delight at nature and sharing it with an audience. It is the multitude of such simple interpreters adding to the nature awareness of the works that keeps the cause flowing and generates inspiration.

As Robert Frost said in his Poem, "The Tuft of Flowers," "People work together whether they work together or apart." And the Chinese said: "A store of small strengths makes one strong," as it makes an organization strong. Margaret Mead said, "Never underestimate what a small group of people, working together, can achieve."

Thus we are grateful for John Cowan for his contribution to a segment of nature.

To John:

*"To a Waterfowl" - William Cullen Bryant: "Whether, midst falling dew/While glow the heavens with the last steps of day/Far through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue/Thy solitary way...Thou'rt gone! The abyss of heaven/Hath*

## The Rigors of Research

*Did you ever think about the long, tedious hours of research that have gone into our storehouse of information? Of course, mankind started out with no instructions about how to proceed, or how animals lived, or how earth and the universe was put together, for that matter. The caveman wasn't even instructed how to build a fire! (We still don't have much to go on, groping around in the Cosmos trying to figure out if life ever existed on other planets, for instance, and struggling to learn just what the human being is all about.)*

*The knowledge that we have stored in books, computers, and data banks has all been acquired by diligent people striving for untold millions of hours to discover the details. I was thinking particularly of our knowledge of life on earth and the life histories of animals and plants. I was reminded of the intricacies of research by a book, "Return to Warden's Grove," by Christopher Norment, a book about the study of one bird - the Harris's Sparrow, *Zonotrichia querula*, and the summer field studies he did in Canada over a period of years.*

*The Harris's Sparrow is the largest of the native sparrows, winters in the Midwestern state and migrates to nesting places in the Northwest Territories completely to the edge of spruce groves where the tundra begins. It wasn't even known where they went until some were seen near Churchill, Canada, in 1900 by Edward Preble, and researcher George Sutton was the first to find a nest and see the eggs in 1931.*

*Author Norment details the laborious 1600-mile journey of the Harris's and how they end up at the edge of spruce groves in May when snow storms can still be swirling around. Norment and a student aide proceeded to rebuild a cabin and established themselves for two months after being transported by a bush plane, 180 miles from the closest settlement. Here they spent grueling hours finding nests and patiently observing the activity each day, despite swarming blackflies and mosquitoes. The only way to know about the natural life histories is to watch, and thus the slow accumulation of data is compiled to go into the bank of knowledge. Wolves, bears, musk ox, shrike birds and a host of other wilderness animals all were part of this revelation game.*

*Norment said, "I keep returning to the fundamental question of what actually occurs in a bird's mind when it settles in a particular spot: what mix of sensory cues leads it to choose one place over another? If I have watched and listened long enough, my intuition will allow me to do what measurements and statistical analyses will not: develop some sense of what an animal is about and how it views the world."*

*"One should never underestimate the ability of an animal with a one-gram brain to do nothing other than wait - to persevere in the face of what, for this human, was utter tedium."*

*For every living creature, mass amounts of study, waiting, watching, has*

### Join the YAH! Blog

"Every good thing, great and small, needs defense." - John Muir

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