



**SIERRA  
CLUB**  
FOUNDED 1892

# Yahi Group



## Butte, Glenn, Lassen, Plumas & Tehama Counties

News  Articles  Programs  Hikes and Outings  Meetings  Events

On the anniversary of the birth of John Muir, April 20, 2006, the Yahi Group and CSU Chico will present a special program, **A Visit with John Muir—The Scootcher of a Lifetime.**

To John Muir, life was a "scootcher," a grand adventure! Geologist, botanist, explorer, adventurer, writer, philosopher, preservationist and political activist, John Muir lived life to its fullest. His ideas and ideals have never been more relevant than they are today.

Frank Helling adopted John Muir as his "Zorba" about twenty years ago and brings the great mountaineer to life in his performance **A Visit with John Muir - The Scootcher of a Lifetime.** Frank has performed for schools, universities, environmental and civic groups, in the National Parks and for special events throughout California. Dr. Paul Fisk, interpretive consultant for the National Park Service, said, "Everyone wearing a Park Service uniform should see Frank Helling's performance as John Muir."

An active adventurer and naturalist himself, Frank has devoted much of his life to "sauntering" in Muir's footsteps. He has backpacked, hiked and climbed in the Sierras, Rockies, Cascades, Alps, Alaska, Hawaii and the deserts of the American Southwest. He has worked as a ranger/naturalist in Kings Canyon National Park and a professional wilderness instructor for Summit Expedition, a Christian Outward Bound school. Additionally, he has taught Elderhostel classes in Sequoia, Kings Canyon and Yosemite National Parks. As an environmental activist, Frank has served as program chair, conservation chair, environmental education chair and on the Executive Committee for the Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Active in education for 38 years, Frank has taught elementary school through college. He helped develop Pleasanton School District's resident outdoor education program, worked with California Migrant Education's outdoor schools, and has taken children backpacking, canoeing and white-water rafting with Harmony Expeditions. He taught environmental education awareness in the California Department of



Frank Helling presents: A visit with John Muir

Education's program "Opening Doors to the World" and has recently been leading environmental education workshops for teachers.

As a teacher, he incorporated environmental education into all areas of the curriculum. He has served as chairperson for the Northern California section of the Association for Outdoor and Environmental Education.

His programs tell the Muir story in a riveting first-person account.

Born in 1838 in Dunbar, Scotland, young John Muir's first "scootchings" were climbing castle walls

and exploring the moors and the wild shores of the North Sea.

At age 11, John's family emigrated to Wisconsin, where this young pioneer's love of wild nature grew. A promising young inventor, Muir nearly lost his sight in an industrial accident and so set out to find his vision. "Giving up the inventions of man and devoting his life to the inventions of God" - meaning nature - John set out on a thousand-mile walk from Kentucky to the Gulf of Mexico by the "wildest, leafiest, least trodden paths he could find."

Muir came to California in 1868, ending up in Yosemite. The wilderness would be home for John Muir - but this home was in danger, plundered by human greed. Muir would lead the fight to save it. He would become "The Father of the National Parks" and founded the Sierra Club in 1892. Eventually even Presidents would seek his counsel, among them Theodore Roosevelt.

Muir explored not only the Sierras but also Alaska, South America, Africa, Asia and Australia, spreading the National Park idea throughout the globe. Today, John Muir's life and thoughts are an inspiration in the environmental crisis, urging us all to care for *Earth-Planet, Universe.*

This special program was arranged by the new YAH! Program Chair, Goodie Sweatt, and what makes the event even more exciting is that it will be co-sponsored by the CSU Chico Office of the Provost. It will be held on the CSU Chico campus, in the Ruth Rowland Theater at the Performing Arts Center, Room 134, from 7:30PM to 9:30PM, Thursday, April 20, 2006.

Professor Michael Gillis, author of the book, *John Bidwell and California: The Life and*

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## Club Notes

### Volunteer Fun and Issues in Glenn, Tehama, Plumas, Lassen and Butte Counties

1. Consider hosting a potluck or a coffee in your part of the Yahi country, invite other Sierra Club members, and discuss outdoor interests and conservation issues you and other club members have. You might want to form a phone tree for notifying each other about public meetings, recreational activities, new conservation concerns, etc.

First, to find other Yahi Club members in your area, please call our newly-elected Executive Committee Member, **Norma Odell**, at 530-566-1348. Then, let Conservation Chair **Debra Moon** know about your group, and who a contact or "point person" in your area is (Debra [Moon@comcast.net](mailto:Moon@comcast.net), 530-343-9204. That way the Yahi leadership would be in the loop to help you

#### 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. 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 the Yahi Group.

out when needed.

**Fred Binswanger** (Lake Almanor, Chester, Susanville, Westwood) and **John Shower** (Greenville, Portola) have volunteered to be "point persons" in their areas. So please contact one of them if you live nearby, or start a group of your own. Fred: 530-256-3197, [sbins@citlink.net](mailto:sbins@citlink.net); John: 530-284-6856 or [theshowers@frontiernet.net](mailto:theshowers@frontiernet.net).

2. Come join us on some of our wonderful outings listed in this newsletter, and don't forget to mark your personal calendar for other upcoming fun events. These include the very special **April 20** Yahi program on John Muir at Chico State, the **April 22** EcoFest, and the **May 7** Endangered Species Faire. CSUC's Provost **Scott McNall** wants the university and the Yahi to develop more programs together, thus benefitting each organization immensely.

### Volunteers Needed for Specific Chores

1. Yahi Outings Chair **Alan Mendoza** (891-8789) could use help from someone who can draw maps freehand for our trail guide, as well as more outings leaders, e.g., to lead hikes, bike rides, snow trips, walks, etc.

2. Our club would very much appreciate members who could help set up, host, or dismantle a Yahi table at the April 22 EcoFest and the May 7 Endangered Species Faire in Chico. Please call Vice-Chair **Gene Anna McMillan** at 345-7003.

3. The Yahi Group sorely needs people to volunteer their gardens (in the greater Chico area) for the annual **Yahi Garden Tour**, our major fundraiser. Please call our Treasurer **Joanne Gerson** (893-2154) if you could offer your garden. Joanne can also use other kinds of help with the tour. (Note: we are very grateful that Joanne has agreed to continue as Treasurer; she has retired from the Executive Committee.)

4. The club also would love volunteers for the Conservation and Program committees. Call Conservation Chair **Debra Moon** (343-9204). There are wonderful and fun leaders, but they need help, for example, with publicity, reporting on meetings, etc.

5. Don't you think the Yahi Group ought to have a **Political Chair and Committee**, as soon as possible – to generate surveys of candidates whom the Sierra Club could support with its endorsement? To get this started please call me at 893-1994.

6. Yahi Forest Issues Chair **Patricia Puterbaugh** ([Cohasset@shocking.com](mailto:Cohasset@shocking.com)) can help you become involved in forest issues.

7. Vice Chair **Gene Anna McMillan** is calling for environmentally minded volunteers to attend Planning and/or Council meetings in the communities of Biggs, Gridley, Oroville, and Paradise. Please get reasons, time and place information from Gene Anna at [geneannamc@pacbell.net](mailto:geneannamc@pacbell.net) or 345-7003.

## Sierra Club Contacts in the Yahi Group Area

### General Contact

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

### Elected and Appointed Officers

**Chair:** Grace Marvin:  
530-893-1994 or [GMRADM@aol.com](mailto:GMRADM@aol.com)

**Vice Chair:** Gene Anna McMillan:  
530-345-7003 or  
[geneannamc@pacbell.net](mailto:geneannamc@pacbell.net)

**Treasurer:** Joanne Gerson:  
530-893-2154 or  
[joanne.gerson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:joanne.gerson@sbcglobal.net)

**Secretary:** Wendy Woods:  
530-899-8607 or [woods@chico.com](mailto:woods@chico.com)

**Fifth Member:** Norma Odell :  
530-566-1348

**Appointed to Board:** Margo Milliken:  
530-343-2246 or [mjmilliken@juno.com](mailto:mjmilliken@juno.com)

**Chapter Rep. To Motherlode:**  
Grace Marvin:  
530-893-1994 or [GMRADM@aol.com](mailto:GMRADM@aol.com)

### Committee Chairs

**Conservation:** Debra Moon :  
530-343-9204 or  
[DebraMoon@comcast.net](mailto:DebraMoon@comcast.net)

**Forest Issues:** Trish Puterbaugh:  
[Cohasset@shocking.com](mailto:Cohasset@shocking.com)

**Membership:** Gerda Lydon:  
530-343-9277 or [PLYdon2948@aol.com](mailto:PLYdon2948@aol.com)

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Susan Sears:  
530-532-0149 or [sjsears@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sjsears@sbcglobal.net)

**Newsletter Publication Editor:**  
Louise Casey:  
530-872-9159 or [YAHInews@comcast.net](mailto:YAHInews@comcast.net)

## National Sierra Club Elections

The annual election for the National Sierra Club's Board of Directors is now underway. In March, you will receive in the mail your national Sierra Club ballot. This will include information on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club's website.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well. Your Board of Directors is required to stand for election by the membership. This Board sets Club policy and budgets at the national level and works closely with the staff to operate the Club. Voting for candidates who express your views on how the Club should grow and change is both a privilege and responsibility of membership.

The ballot includes a statement by each candidate. You can also learn more by visiting the Club's election website: <http://www.sierraclub.org/bod/2006election>. This site provides links to additional information about candidates and their views on protection of the environment and a variety of issues facing the Club.

A growing number of members find the user-friendly Internet voting option on the election website to be very convenient as well as

## Third Annual Yahi Garden Tour

Spring is in the air and we are looking for gardens to tour. Butte Creek Canyon folks are putting on their own this year on June 10<sup>th</sup> to raise funds for the Covered Bridge. We are thinking of having our tour May 20<sup>th</sup> in Cohasset. If you haven't been up there recently you will be surprised by all the new upscale homes. Spring bloom will be over in the valley, but you can have a second Spring by coming on this year's Sierra Club tour. Gather your friends and make it a special day out of town.

Tickets will be on sale at the Little Red Hen, Fostine's, Growing Grounds, Chico Creek, and Vagabond Rose in Chico, Mendon's in Paradise and Nelson's Footwear in Oroville.

As usual, we will need volunteers to host each location the day of the tour. These lucky people get to go on a special pre-tour to meet the owners and preview the gardens.

Other volunteers will mail out letters to garden clubs, make tickets, write descriptions of the gardens, make posters, place posters and flyers and handle publicity.

As you see there are little jobs and big

## Awards of Appreciation

Every year we give awards to those individuals who have contributed toward the work of the Yahi group far and beyond the call of duty. The awards were presented at the Christmas party in December 2005. This year's recipients were:

- **JIM BROBECK**, Chico, for his work as member of the Lassen Preservation Group for many years and most recently for groundwater issues in the Butte basin;
- **PERRY EATON**, Palermo, for his work on the Chambers Creek trail;
- **JOANNE GERSON**, Chico, for her many years as Treasurer for the Yahi Group and coordinator for fundraisers such as the Garden Tour and others;
- **JANICE HECKERSON**, Durham, for her work as Secretary on ex-Com 2003/04;
- **JON HILBERT**, Chico, for his many years of taking the proof of this newsletter to Gridley for printing and bringing back the copies to be labeled and mailed;
- **JOHN HOLLISTER**, Paradise, member of the Lassen Preservation group and Vice Chair on ex-Com 2003/04;
- **HILLARY LOCKE**, Chico, for her many years of work to lead to the establishment of Bidwell Ranch as open space;
- **STEVE MILLER**, Chico, for his many years of distributing the newsletter to businesses in the area;
- **JOHN WOODS**, Chico, for many years of 'selling' ads you see in this newsletter as a fundraiser to pay for the printing and mailing of the newsletter;
- **WENDY WOODS**, Chico, for being 5th member on ExCom in 2003/04, and Secretary from 2005 until the present.

Thank you, one and all. It is those volunteer

## In Memoriam

*By Alan Mendoza and Jean Crist*

The Yahi Group has recently lost three of its finest members and activists, **Joe Dudek**, **Jerry Novotny**, **Pavia Wald**, and **Al Braun**. All three were major contributors to the success and growth of our group and volunteered countless hours of their time to the club.

**JOE DUDEK** served on the Executive Committee, was the group's outings chair for many years and led outings for the group for over 25 years. He was also the national winner of the Oliver Kehrlein Award for outstanding long-term outings leadership in the Sierra Club. Joe led his last outing at the age of 82 and was wonderful at making newcomers feel welcome on outings and spending time with each participant.

**JERRY NOVOTNY** also served on the ExCom for many years and was an outings leader for over 10 years for our group. He was a long-time school teacher and always brought a sharp mind and a wonderful sense of humor to all he did for the club. He cared deeply for the environment and was able to transfer that love into motivating others to take action to help protect our special places.

**PAVIA WALD** was an avid outdoors woman who also served on the ExCom and did a fantastic job at bringing in new members to our group with her passion and commitment. Pavia also tirelessly worked to support our outings program as a leader and was a very talented illustrator for the newsletter. Before her death from Lou Gehrig's disease she was able to fulfill her lifetime dream and get a position with the National Parks Service in Alaska. All who knew Pavia couldn't help but be moved by her energy and enthusiasm.

**AL BRAUN** was a "Man for all Seasons" whose interests were so varied they are difficult to review. His focus was on the environment, and as soon as he came to Paradise he was involved in issues of the area. If there was an environmental group, he was there and often taking a leadership role. He was a charter member of the Paradise/Ridge Land Trust, BEC, Sierra Club, Northern CA Regional Land Trust, and Save Our Gateway. He cared about the future of this area and even took a

## Club Notes *(con'tinued from p. 2)*

### Special Thanks to These Volunteers

1. **Debra Moon** has been working very well, long, and hard as our new Conservation

*(continued on p. 3)*

Chair. You may want to read her article in this newsletter about several areas in which Yahi volunteers currently are showing their concerns.

2. The Yahi also are very fortunate to have **Don** and **Kay Enos** compile information about new Yahi members who respond to Membership Chair **Gerda Lydon's** questionnaires; these concern potential volunteer interests. If you did not get a chance to respond to this questionnaire, please call our newly-elected Executive Committee Member **Norma Odell** (566-1348) and she will be happy to send you one.

**YAH! ExCom**

# Letters to the Editor

## Mineral Snowmobilers Want Access to McGowan Cross-Country Ski Area

*Re: Nordic Notes, Yahi Group Winter Newsletter, 2005/2006: Mineral Snowmobilers Want Access to McGowan Cross-Country Ski Area*

After reading this article in your last publication I feel compelled to write and explain the true picture of this situation.

First of all, the Mineral Snowmobilers are not the party requesting the change in the designation of the McGowan Lake Road. This group of wonderful members is comprised of many past or present cross country skiers (myself included) and would NEVER do anything to jeopardize their relationship with any other chosen form of recreation. They willingly share their groomed trails and are VERY courteous when encountering others on the trails. They have been praised many times by cc skiers for their courtesy.

Recreation Outdoors Coalition (ROC), a coalition that represents any and every form of outdoors recreation, including cross-country skiers, made this request. When the Forest Service reworked their winter recreation map ROC was there and helped locate possible cc ski areas to be designated where their right to a noise and pollution free environment would be guaranteed. We also educate other groups to be cognizant of the rights of others to avoid any form of conflict, to be good stewards, practice tolerance and safety.

In 1998 Recreation Outdoors Coalition began a project of a loop trail circumventing the Lassen Volcanic National Park, in the Lassen National Forest, on 98% of existing roads. This route is to be a mixed-use route. We were able to accommodate every other form of recreation but the snowmobilers without the changing of the designated portion of the McGowan Road from Forest Service Road 29N17 to the Brokeoff Road (29N11Y), which then goes south leaving the McGowan Lake Road. This route has been monitored many times and only on two occasions has there been evidence that cc skiers were using this portion. On both of those occasions the skiers had to be brought out by snowmobile because they were much farther from the

destination than they thought, they were exhausted, and it was getting dark.

The point of getting off the McGowan Lake Road is approximately 1 mile west of the Nanny Creek-McGowan Lake intersection and when traveling this distance seems much farther. The tree cover and topography of the intersection of 29N11Y and McGowan Lake Road and the continuing route west to Hwy 17 are such that it would be very hard to hear snowmobiles traveling this route. They would have to be going slowly as this is not to be a groomed route and the chance that a snowmobile would be using this route at the same time as you would be VERY rare. The club in Mineral has the right to use private property to access the 17 Road so usually would not go this way. However, to have a designated route we do not advocate the use of private property.

We would also be more than happy to do a sound test to determine just how much sound would carry in that area. With both groups working together on this test I am sure you would find that you would be more distracted from road noise than from snowmobiles.

The proposed Share the Dream Route that would be accommodated by a change of destination in winter use is projected to take 10 years to complete. We do not look at there being much use until this project is completed.

I hope that your group would look more closely at this project and consider the possibility of a change in designation to accommodate other uses in winter. This would allow for everyone to have equal opportunity.

## Yahi Executive Committee Meetings

Yahi Group Executive Committee meetings are usually held the first Thursday of every month from 7PM to 9PM. Please contact Grace Marvin: 530-893-1994 or [GMRADM@aol.com](mailto:GMRADM@aol.com) regarding the specific place and time if you would like to attend or if you have an item you would like placed on the agenda.

## Pike Eradication and Trout Protection

I have reviewed the 2005 *Lake Davis Pike Eradication Project Planning Document* prepared by the California Department of Fish and Game for their proposed Lake Davis Eradication. The planning document is an eye-opener!

The Department's funding request to CalFed is premature. The Department has estimated the cost of the project without selecting the alternative to be implemented for the project and also without stating the costs of the mitigation measures to be implemented to protect the human environment resulting from the effects of the project. The cost could double.

The planning document discloses that Big Grizzly Creek will be dry for 7 to 14 days because of the failure to release water from the dam outlets, which violates California Fish and Game Code Section 5937. Fish and Game Code 5937 is mandatory, and the Department is required by state law to release water from the dam to keep fish that exist or are planted in good condition at all times.

To further complicate the matter of keeping the wild trout fishery of Big Grizzly Creek in good condition at all times (alive), there is seepage at the dam. Consequently, even if the Department has the outlet valves shut, the chemicals used for the treatment of the lake would seep into Big Grizzly Creek and would destroy the wild trout fishery resources of the creek, with the potential to harm the wild trout and other fish and aquatic species of the Wild and Scenic Middle Fork Feather River (confluence of Big Grizzly Creek and the WSMFFR downstream - Portola Area).

The Department of Fish and Game must not select the alternative that would cost the least just to satisfy their proposed premature budget. That would be unreasonable and would not be in the best interest of public trust resources and assets owned by the people of the State of California.

I recommended the use of carbon filter [*ed. note: removes rotenone*] tank trucks in Big Grizzly Creek to protect the wild trout fishery, and that is not shown in the planning for the project. I do not want to be told that because the budget does not have the funds for the use of carbon filter tank trucks, the carbon filters cannot be used and the wild trout of Big Grizzly Creek would be destroyed again.

As I stated, the estimated cost for the project is premature until the NEPA/CEQA document selects the preferred alternative with mitigation measures, subject to public review and comment.

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Certified Public Accountant

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## Conservation Notes

### Lake Davis Rotenone Poisoning

Our Yahi Group quarterly program on January 19, 2006 at the Chico Public Library examined the issue of rotenone poisoning in Lake Davis, scheduled by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) for June-September 2007. Northern Pike, a fierce and prolific nonnative species of fish, inhabit the lake and are a threat to anadromous fish (steelhead and salmon). If the Pike migrate out of Lake Davis into the Feather River and beyond, they would become a threat to steelhead and salmon in the Sacramento River, its tributaries, and the Delta.

DFG is working to contain the Pike in Lake Davis and to develop a plan to eliminate them before they become a larger threat. Concerns of the Sierra Club include: effective containment, proper data collection and examination of data in regard to rotenone use; preservation of other species in the area which are sensitive to the rotenone; best management practices; and proper observance of procedure in administering the rotenone.

Julie Cunningham, Environmental Scientist, and Ed Pert, Chief of the Northern Pike Project for DFG, presented an overview of the project and the plan they are in the process of developing for eliminating the Pike. Joe Abbott, Yahi Group member, presented an argument against the rotenone poisoning. Some alternatives suggested included draining the lake to eliminate the Pike, an option which has been discussed before.

A lively discussion was generated by the presentation during the question-and-answer period. One concern that became evident was that data collected by DFG from the previous attempt to poison the Pike in 1997 was not complete, nor were all the reports that should have been generated to assist this poisoning project to succeed available for the EIR or the public.

It was suggested that a Yahi Group member be appointed to sit on the existing Steering Committee for the Lake Davis Northern Pike project, and that additionally, a Citizens' Oversight Committee of scientists and conservationists be formed to monitor the project.

At the end of the program, the Yahi Group ExCom voted to continue to obtain more information, to respond to the EIR when it is available, and to pursue the organization of a Citizens' Oversight Committee.

At the Mother Lode Chapter meeting on January 22, the Conservation Committee indicated support for the Citizens' Oversight Committee. A letter will be generated from the MLC to the Department of Fish and Game to initiate the committee and to state our goals to rid California, and the northwest, of the nonnative Northern Pike. DFG supports the same interests. The committee will provide more manpower, and some additional expertise, in accomplishing the goals and in avoiding further ecological disasters or errors such as those which occurred in the 1997 attempt.

### Bidwell Park Master Management Plan (BPMMP)

Conservation Chair Debra Moon has been following the lengthy process of the BPMMP update, thanks to Randy Abbott from the Friends of Bidwell Park, who

attends the Park Commission meetings regularly and advocates for keeping the park wild and natural. The issue is a common modern-day issue: preservation of nature versus developed recreation. The Friends of Bidwell Park are discouraged and feel they are losing ground (literally!) on the issue. For all of us who care about preserving Bidwell Park's natural state as much as is possible, we need to attend the Park Commission meetings, follow the issue, and possibly be prepared to petition for and organize a Conservancy for the park. We hope the Yahi Group will be involved in the preservation of trails, and in the overall protection of the fauna, flora, land and water in our beautiful park.

### Outreach

The Lake Davis issue has provided the Yahi Group with an opportunity to start an education and activity outreach to Plumas County. John Shower and Fred Binswanger have stepped forward as members interested in establishing groups for outings or education in Plumas County. We look forward to working with them with greater organization, and at regular intervals, to help empower the Sierra Club influence to members outside the Chico area. This will make the Yahi Group stronger and more effective with highly important issues such as the Lake Davis poisoning, watershed and land use. It will also help the Sierra Club members in more distant areas connect with Chico members for activities and hikes.

Members of the Shasta Group have contacted Grace Marvin, Chair, and Debra Moon, Conservation Chair, with interest in working on certain issues together. Gordon Johnson, Conservation Chair of the Shasta Group, spoke to the Yahi Group ExCom on February 2 in regard to these issues.

### National Sierra Club Legal Action

On January 5, 2006, the Yahi Group ExCom voted to support a proposal brought to the board by Trish Puterbaugh, also a Yahi Group member, and active in the Lassen Forest Preservation Group. The National Sierra Club is supporting a lawsuit against Sierra Pacific for checkerboard clear-cutting on land in the Creeks Region, in Almanor Ranger District of the Lassen National Forest. This affects 10,000 acres of logging land in a sensitive area with several endangered species associated with old forests. In addition to the legal action, the Mother Lode Chapter is assisting with the development of a website regarding the clear-cutting issue and the development of rules that limit clear-cutting posted on the website. There is a market campaign to get at



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## Nordic Notes

### Attention Snow Shoers

Thank you for not walking in the main ski tracks at Colby Meadows. Are there any snow shoers who are interested in separate trails in the Colby and Willow Creek drainages? Skiers did 130 hours of trail maintenance last fall. We can always use more help. Call Larry at 342-7998 for more information.

We've also asked Lassen National Park to put up signs at multiple locations at the southwest and Manzanita Lake entrances. Skiers want a safer, smoother ski tour. Send an e-mail to [Mary.King@nps.gov](mailto:Mary.King@nps.gov) or call her at 530-595-4444, ext. 5189.

### Snowmobile Issues

Next summer the Jonesville parking lot will be expanded to the east of the restrooms. For now, we ask that skiers park near the trailhead. Park smart, and don't waste space!

On Sunday, January 29, a group of skiers heard snow machines in the McGowan Ski Area. The Forest Service has been notified.

Several Mineral snowmobilers still want access to the McGowan Cross-Country Ski Area. Let the Forest Service know that you don't want the noise and pollution of snowmobiles in the McGowan area. Express your concerns with Recreation Officer David Erwin at [www.dcerwin@fs.fed.us](mailto:www.dcerwin@fs.fed.us), or by phone at 530-258-2141.

### Trail Maintenance

Thanks to all who helped us last fall. The warm rains and winds of December caused some erosion problems and knocked down some trees. We'll be marking these spots and putting them on next fall's "To Do" list. The Almanor Recreation District has a new hydrologist, Curt Sable. We hope to get his assistance so the trails will be more sustainable. We can always use more helpers, especially if they have a chainsaw or a brush cutter (weed-eater on steroids).

## Sierra Club at the Snow Goose Festival

YAH! Group Sierra Club members made possible an informative and interesting table at the Snow Goose Festival in Chico January 28 and 29. Those staffing the table were Gene Anna McMillan, Michael Dugas, Carol Henning, Sheena Hume, John Alexander and Marie France on Saturday. On Sunday Joanne Gerson, Darren Courtney, April Nesbitt, Norma O'Dell and Carrie McGranahan represented us well.

Wendy Woods and Gerda Lydon furnished member names. Gene McKenzie helped transport items and organize the display for the table, plus staffing the table at odd moments. We sold \$45.50 worth of note cards, T-shirts and trail guides and gave out YAH! newsletters and National Outings information. I enjoyed and appreciated everyone's help in making this a rewarding

# Yahi Club Quarterly Program

## A Visit with John Muir – The Scootcher of a Lifetime: Thursday, April 20, 2006

By Debra Moon

The Yahi Club's quarterly program will be spectacular! Our new Program Chair, Goodie Sweatt, has arranged for Frank Helling, a renowned impersonator of John Muir, the founder of the Sierra Club to appear on Thursday, April 20 in Chico for a performance. This date is John Muir's birthday, and Frank Helling must be in demand on that date. Thanks to Goodie, he'll be sharing his talents with us that evening. If you want to find out more about this performer, you can visit the Sierra Club website where he has a link, [www.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/live\\_presentations/helling.html](http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/live_presentations/helling.html). The program is entitled "A Visit with John Muir – The Scootcher of a Lifetime."

The will be co-sponsored by the CSU Chico Office of the Provost. It will be held on campus, in the Ruth Rowland Theater at the Performing Arts Center, room 134, from 7:30-9:30 PM. Professor Michael Gillis, author of the book, *John Bidwell and California: The Life and Writings of a Pioneer*, will introduce "John Muir," who was a close friend of the Bidwells.

## Spring 2006

**Weekly Power Walk** (grade 2, class A). Meet at the Chico Park & Ride each Tuesday evening at 6:30PM for a 1 1/2 hour brisk walk along the creek. Wear tennies/walking shoes and bring water and a flashlight. Leader: Jeanne, 899-9980.

**Yahi Group Cross Country Ski List.** Join our more than 65 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. 16<sup>th</sup> Street and B Street in Chico). Cost: \$4 per night. Free lessons included. For more information call Karen, 899-8305 or Betty, 345-7205.

## March

**Saturday, March 4 – Cross Country Ski, Heart Lake Wilderness** (grade 2, class B). This is for people who own ski equipment. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$ for drivers. Unusual weather or snow conditions may change destination. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8 AM. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

**Friday, March 10 – Dinner Out.** Let's have dinner at Cocodine, another Thai favorite in the Raley's Shopping Center (Raley's Skyway Plaza) at 6 PM. Please call John at 872-8258 or [hubbollister@yahoo.com](mailto:hubbollister@yahoo.com) by Thursday evening, March 9, so I can make reservations. Leader: John, 872-8258.

**Saturday, March 11 – Table Mountain Hike** (grade 2, class A). Enjoy the spectacular wildflowers, views and waterfalls on this 6-8 mile hike. Bring plant guide, camera, lunch, water and sturdy footwear. Rain cancels. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 9 AM. Return time around 4 PM. Leader: Julian, 893-1994; Asst. Leader: Alan, 891-8789.

**Sunday, March 12 - Chico Bike Ride.** Ride beside the Western Pacific Train tracks and CSUC campus. We'll check out some neighborhoods and campus edges. Then lunch downtown, maybe Moxie's. Meet 11:00 AM at West Lindo Ave and RR tracks. Park on street. Helmets required and bring water. Rain cancels. Leader: Carla, 891-6977; Asst. Leader: Gene, 873-1552

**Saturday, March 18 - 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. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8AM. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

**Sunday, March 19 – Yana Trail Hike Along the Sacramento River to Inks Creek** (grade 2, class A). Explore the Yana Trail along the Sacramento River in the huge BLM Paynes Creek Recreation Area north of Red Bluff. Incredible foothill bluff and river scenery, spring wildflowers and bird sightings await as we hike to an old native American village site and back. A 7-mile round-trip hike on trail. May be some poison oak. Bring sturdy hiking boots, water, lunch and \$ for carpooling. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 10 AM or at the trailhead at Jelly's Ferry Bridge

River Access at about 11:15 AM. A 106 mile round-trip drive from Chico. Please call ahead. Rain cancels. Leader: Stephen, 876-1391.

**Thursday-Friday, March 23—24—The Vernal Pool Complexes of Northstate: Biology, Conservation, and Management Conference.** Butte Environmental Council is hosting a vernal pool conference, poster session, and tours. There will be presentations by eminent scholars and agency representatives concerning plant and animal species dependent on the vernal pool ecosystem, conservation efforts and needs, and what management techniques have been used to enhance the viability of certain sites. The conference will be held at the Sierra Nevada Brewery, 1075 E. 20th Street in Chico. Info: <http://www.bcnnet.org>.

**Saturday-Sunday, March 25-26 Antelope Creek Backpack** (class 1, grade B). An early-season backpack of two miles down to a beautiful camping spot besides scenic Antelope Creek. We will join the day hike group for part of their hike after dropping our packs or you can just hang out or explore the old McClure homestead site. Return up 1500' on Sunday to our cars after enjoying a leisurely breakfast. Leader: Alan, 891-8789 or [ajmendoza@prodigy.net](mailto:ajmendoza@prodigy.net).

**Saturday, March 25 – Antelope Creek Hike** (class 2, grade B). A scenic one-way hike along the wildflower-strewn North Fork of Antelope Creek in the proposed Wilderness addition to the Ishi Wilderness. Expect some muddy crossings on this 7-8 mile mostly downstream hike with 1500' of elevation loss. A car shuttle will be required. Bring lunch, water, carpool \$\$ and sturdy boots. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8:30AM or at Hog Lake parking lot at 9:30AM. Round-trip drive of 90-95 miles. Rain cancels. A joint trip with the Shasta Group. Call to reserve spot. Leaders: Bill (Shasta Group/Red Bluff), 527-8203; Alan, 891-8789 (Yahi/Chico).

**Saturday, March 25 – Cross Country Ski Lassen Park Road to Lake Helen** (class 3, grade B). This is for people who own ski equipment. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$ for drivers. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8AM. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

## April

**Saturday, April 1 – Wildflower Tour on Bidwell Ranch, Chico** (grade 1, class A). Tidy tips, meadowfoam and blue dicks should all be out to greet those who wish to experience the natural beauty of Bidwell Ranch. A docent led walk will last about 1-2 hours. Bring your favorite flower field guide, waterproof shoes or boots and water. Meet at the east end of the Wildwood parking lot (at the entrance to Upper Bidwell Park). This tour is a joint effort of the Yahi Group and the Butte County Environmental Council. Leader: Betty, 345-7205.

## 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 [www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/](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. A customary amount is 6 cents per mile per passenger depending on the vehicle, the number of passengers, and the road conditions. 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 web site.

**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 [www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/](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).

# Outings and Events

**Saturday, April 8 – Late Table Mountain Hike** (class 1, grade A). We'll catch the end of the spring flowers. We know it is not the end, just the cycle of life. If it is too dry we will explore a similar nearby area. Please bring water, lunch and sturdy shoes. We should return to Chico by 3 PM. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8:30 AM. Leader: John, 872-8258 or [hubbollister@yahoo.com](mailto:hubbollister@yahoo.com).

**Sunday, April 9 – Teichert Ponds Walk** (grade 1, class A). Take a 2-hour tour of the 33 acres of City of Chico property under discussion for recreational/natural area. The ponds are between the Chico Mall (and the beginnings of the Kohl's-based center) and Little Chico Creek on the east side of Hwy 99. RAIN OR SHINE. Meet at the Chico Park & Ride at 10 AM and carpool to entrance. Leader: Gene, 873-1552; Asst. Leader: Carla, 891-6977.

**Thursday, April 20 - A Visit with John Muir—The Scootcher of a Lifetime.** Our new program chair Goodie Sweatt has arranged for Frank Helling, a renowned impersonator of John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, to appear in Chico for a performance. This date is John Muir's birthday, and Frank Helling will be sharing his talents with us that evening. Program open to all. Please come and invite your friends! It will be held on the CSUC campus, in the Ruth Rowland Theater at the Performing Arts Center, room 134. 7:30 to 9:30 PM. Contact: Goodie Sweatt, 894-3988

**Saturday, April 22 – Bike Ride to Chico Airport** (grade 2, class A). Meet at 11 AM at the Chico Nut Company, Esplanade and E. 11<sup>th</sup> Ave (park on E. 10<sup>th</sup> Ave by Chico Nut Company parking lot). We'll take the nearby bike path to the Airport and the newly opened Chico Air Museum. While eating lunch by the runway we'll watch planes take off and land and then check out the museum. Round trip ride of 8 miles. Helmets required. Bring water and lunch or buy lunch at the airport deli. Rain cancels. Leader: Gene: 873-1552; Asst.

Leader: Carla, 891-6977.

**Saturday, April 22 – Long Deer Creek Hike** (grade 2, class B). This is the full 9-10 mile round trip on the trails of Deer Creek. Great water, flowers and scenery make this a perennial local favorite. See parts of Deer Creek you haven't before. Bring lunch, water, carpool \$ and lots of energy for this mid-spring pleasure. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8:30 AM, returning about 5 PM. Leader: John, 872-8258 or [hubbollister@yahoo.com](mailto:hubbollister@yahoo.com).

**Saturday, April 22—EcoFest.** Bands, workshops, children's eco-art, information booths and speaker Julia Butterfly Hill. CSU Chico, Kendall Lawn and the Free Speech area. 12 noon to 6 PM. For more information, 898-5676 or [earc@csuchico.edu](mailto:earc@csuchico.edu).

**Sunday, April 23 – Black Butte Lake Hike** (grade 1, class A). Come explore Black Butte Lake. We'll walk across the dam then return to our cars and drive to the west side of the lake and walk the Buckhorn Trail which is a 1.3 mile loop and then walk the shoreline for a couple of miles to get in a longer walk. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 12 PM. Bring snack and water. Leader: Michelle, 865-9491 or [Michelle95963@yahoo.com](mailto:Michelle95963@yahoo.com); Asst. Leader: Annette, 872-3557.

**Saturday, April 29 – Feather Falls Hike** (grade 2, class B). Come enjoy the 6<sup>th</sup> highest waterfall in the U.S. and the beautifully flowered and shaded, 8-9 mile round trip trail to it. We'll take the lower trail to the overlook, then go above the falls for lunch by the creek and return via the upper trail. Please wear boots or sturdy hiking shoes and bring lunch, water and carpool \$\$ Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8AM or at the NW corner of the Oroville Wal-Mart parking lot at 8:35AM. Leader: Julian: 893-1994.

## May

**Saturday, May 6 – Deer Creek Hike** (grade 2, class B). Experience the full spring beauty of the Deer Creek trail in a 5-6 mile round-trip hike. Deer Creek in spring offers several small waterfalls as we pass through the newly green buds of Douglas fir, ponderosa pine and incense cedar. Bring lunch, water, carpool \$ and a camera. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 9AM. Leader: Julian, 893-1994.

**Saturday, May 6—27th Annual Endangered Species Faire.** It is the oldest environmental fair in northern California. This year's theme reflects local concerns regarding plans to exploit the aquifer: "*Hidden Waters ... In Danger?*" If your school, agency, or non-profit would like to attend and promote your activities or support the Faire, we welcome both. 10AM to 4PM in Bidwell Park, Chico. Contact: Cindy at [mccartneyfive@earthlink.net](mailto:mccartneyfive@earthlink.net) or 891-6424.

**Friday, May 12 - Dinner at Grayatip Thai Restaurant.** Enjoy good company and a delicious meal. Please call by Thursday, so I can make the reservation. Leader: Michelle 865-9491 or [Michelle95963@yahoo.com](mailto:Michelle95963@yahoo.com).

**Sunday, May 14 – Forks of the Butte Creek Trail Hike & Swim** (grade 1, class A). We'll hike upstream from the Doe Mill Road Bridge over Butte Creek, through the old Forks of Butte mining town site in the large BLM recreation area of the same name. Along the way we will see pretty, creek side campsites north of the site. There will be time for swimming and even gold panning, as it's only about 3 miles round trip. Bring water, lunch, extra shoes for creek exploration and a swimsuit. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 10 AM for the drive up to Forest Ranch then down into the canyon. Low clearance vehicles not recommended for this somewhat rocky road. Leader: Stephen: 876-1391.

**Saturday, May 20— 3rd Annual YAH! Group Garden Tour.** Tickets will be on sale at the Little Red Hen, Fostine's, Growing Grounds, Chico Creek, and Vagabond Rose in Chico, Mendon's in Paradise and Nelson's Footwear in Oroville. Contact: Joanne at 893-2154.

**Saturday-Sunday, May 20-21 – Overnight Campout at Bruff's Rock/Smoke Creek Canyon** (grade 1, class A). We will camp at the beautiful Ramshorn BLM improved campground north of Susanville. On Saturday we'll take a relatively flat hike of about 3 miles round trip in the high desert of Upper Smoke Creek Canyon. Bring sturdy boots, hat, sunscreen, water, camera and binoculars. The wildlife we may see includes wild mustangs, wild burros, mule deer, antelope, sage grouse, chucker and trout. Wildflowers should be abundant. The canyon has many examples of native rock

art (petroglyphs). Bruff's Rock is of particular interest. It was first sketched by J. Goldsborough Bruff in his guidebook of the Overland Trail. We'll also visit the Old Shinn Ranch homestead nearby. On the way home we may stop at the proposed Dyer Mountain Resort Area near Westwood. Leader: Alan, 891-8789.

**Thursday, May 25 – Sierra Club Newsletter Folding.** Join us to help sort and prepare the Yahi Group Newsletter for mailing. It only takes about an hour, and we always have a lot of fun! Volunteers are always needed. Newcomers and old members are both welcome. Call 343-9277 for directions and more info.

**May 27-29 - Mill Creek Memorial Day Backpack** (grade3, class B). Join the Yahi Group for our annual Memorial Day weekend trail maintenance trip. We will hike either 14-15 miles downstream starting at Upper Mill Creek (4000 feet) to Black Rock (2000 feet) or hike in 4-5 miles at camp before returning. On the way we hike through forests, enjoy wildflowers and follow along the creek. The Forest Service may provide tools and car shuttle back to our cars. Group size is limited, call for reservations. Return time around 6PM Monday. Leader: Tony, 916-448-3230; Asst. Leader: Alan, 891-8789 or [ajmendoza@prodigy.net](mailto:ajmendoza@prodigy.net).

## June

**Saturday, June 3 – Paradise Lake Walk** (grade 2, Class A). Come enjoy the beauty and serenity of Paradise Lake. We will do a 9 mile round-trip hike on the dirt path which follows the indentations of the Lake. Meet at 9 AM at the Chico Park & Ride or at 9:45 AM at the Paradise Lake parking area. For driving directions contact the leader. Bring water lunch and comfortable shoes. Leader: Michelle, 865-9491.

## Sierra Club Hike Classifications

### Distance Rating

Grade 1: up to 6 miles

Grade 2: 6-10 miles

Grade 3: 10-15 miles

Grade 4: 15-20 miles

Class A: up to 1000 feet

Class B: 1000-2000 feet

Class C: 2000-3000 feet

# Limiting Factors

Down by the riverside at Oroville, CA, some of those introduced-from-China Tree of Heaven saplings developed with strange flattened stems. The condition is called fasciation, a word similar in structure to fascination, and which my spell-checker failed to recognize. You can be fascinated by fasciation!

The park department would probably welcome a culprit like fasciation that would curtail the Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus*) growth, since it is an invasive foreign plant that spreads rapidly. There have been several futile attempts by cutting crews to remove it, although in moderation it is an attractive small deciduous tree that retains greenery throughout the hot summer. Introduced plants often become overly invasive without the natural limiting factors of their original habitats and crowd out established native species.

Fasciation is possibly caused by a virus or other irritation, an interruption and deformity of botanical growth similar to the foreign substance of gall-making insects that create the swellings of galls. Too much of this deforming material can stunt the plant or kill it. Fasciation occurs in a number of plant species, and I have seen poison oak thickets thus afflicted. It is a reminder that there are limiting factors to growth that will bring living things back into balance if allowed to exist. Viruses, galls, bacteria, and burls, in fact, can afflict any organism and cause untold grief.

There are not only viruses lurking about ready to attack many life forms, but predators, diseases, parasites and dominating life-forms play a part, and the more abundant the population, the more likely the chance for contacting troublemakers. Some would call it trouble, but others might call it limiting factors that help keep a healthy balance.

What is too much of anything? Too many deer can play havoc with habitat vegetation and upset other animal balances. A mountain lion might move in to take advantage of an overpopulation, or often it is deer starvation or disease that thin the ranks. Some would say there are too many cormorants that are devastating too many fish.

Sierra Club members have an interest in limiting factors and outdoor balances, since those conditions affect the quality of outdoor hikes and involvement with nature. There is even concern about the number of people using popular trails and the pollution and wear-marks left behind.

Food is a limiting factor that shows itself in places like drought-stricken Africa where there is human starvation in a country already overpopulated. It takes some shrewd food management and large imports from agricultural areas to maintain a city like San Francisco or Tokyo, and rural lands are rapidly being wiped out and replaced with houses. What is the limit on human population in

Sacramento . . . or Oroville, CA? Already there is talk of small-town Oroville becoming much larger with industrial additions. Is this desirable for people who prefer less smog and clamor, the reason many moved to Oroville? It certainly isn't desirable for surrounding open space habitats and the wildlife that lives here.

It is bothersome to see anything die. Yet death is part of the scenario of life. John Muir said: "The woods are full of dead and dying trees, yet needed . . . to complete the beauty of the living." There seemingly are a great many animal and plant species that have lost out to limiting factors. I think of dinosaurs and mastodons in America, and how they are gone, leaving only a fossil trace to inform us that they ever existed. What limiting factor was involved in their disappearance?

*"Nature is ever at work building up and pulling down, creating and destroying, keeping everything whirling and flowing, allowing no rest*

# 7th Snow Goose Festival A Huge Success

*Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway marks record attendance in its 7<sup>th</sup> Year.*

Organizers of the annual Snow Goose Festival are calling this year's winter birding and wildlife-viewing festival a huge success. They are extremely pleased – with both the record number of participants, and the mostly fair weather experienced while on dozens of outings throughout the Sacramento Valley.

With more than 50 workshops, tours, hikes and evening events, in addition to free exhibits and children's activities, the Festival reports having hosted more than 1,500 people over the course of five days.

"Many events sold out early again this year," noted Festival Coordinator Jennifer Patten, "and that indicates to us a continued popularity and community commitment to the Festival, which really helps to keep our volunteers engaged, too."

The Snow Goose Festival recorded 923 adult and 62 youth participants in "registered" events this year, with 260 folks attending the Wildlife Art Reception, and 320 attending the Saturday Banquet, alone. Those numbers don't reflect the many uncounted visitors to the Chico Art Center during the Festival's Wednesday through Sunday wildlife art exhibit, or those who dropped in to participate in free activities or view live animal exhibits at the Chico Masonic Family Center during the Festival weekend.

"All in all, a wonderful, wild weekend," Jennifer remarked. "We have so many generous sponsors and donors to thank, as well as a very dedicated corps of volunteers, for making this our biggest Festival yet. Their support, and the community's support, is very much noted and

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

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# Conservation

## Bidwell Park: Crown Jewel or Poor Stepchild? Perception Versus Reality

By Susan Mason

Whenever you read any marketing literature about Chico, it always includes a prominent mention of Bidwell Park, frequently described as the "Crown Jewel of Chico." Real estate ads often tout a home's proximity to the park, as in "Walk to Park", "Close to Upper Park." Bidwell Park is the first place we take visitors to our community. Newcomers to Chico, especially retirees, cite Bidwell Park as one of the main reasons they moved to the area. Year-round, thousands of people walk, jog, run and hike in the park, walk their dogs, ride their bikes and horses, use the children's play areas, visit the observatory or Horseshoe Lake, participate in public and private park events, look at wildlife, play golf or enjoy Upper Park views. On warm days, many thousands more use the park for swimming and picnics, play softball and horseshoes or just enjoy being outdoors.

You might think that the benefits that the park brings to our community, both economic and in our quality of life here (not to mention the affection we feel for the park and the pride we feel in having a world-class natural landscape in our midst), would be reflected in the funding and care that the park receives from Chico residents. Let's examine whether Bidwell Park is, in fact, Chico's crown jewel, its poor stepchild or something in between.

First, we need to briefly review the park's funding sources for maintenance and capital projects. All of the park's maintenance is paid for from Chico's General Fund, whose five biggest sources of income are sales tax (43%), utility tax (15%), DMV fee (12%), Interfund transfers (10%) and property taxes (8%). The Park Division receives about \$3 million per year, but this amount also funds the care of 30,000 street trees, 10 undeveloped open spaces and greenways, and 9 developed parks. Permanent park staffing consists of 7 maintenance workers, a field supervisor, and 2 rangers for the entire 3670 acre park. Of course, they're also responsible for the other 19 Park Division parks and open space areas. The park's capital projects are funded from a variety of sources, with perhaps \$100,000 per year from the General Fund, and the remaining provided primarily by transfers from other Chico Funds, and state park bond per-capita funds. For example, the recent One Mile Recreation Area Irrigation and Lighting project received \$67,000 from the Park Operating Fund and \$101,000 from Proposition 12. There's currently no development impact fee (i.e. a fee paid for each new Chico residence) for park maintenance or capital projects. So, unless you've bought an expensive vehicle recently, you probably haven't contributed much towards maintaining the park.

Of course, those who enjoy or benefit from the park could make a direct financial contribution. Individuals and businesses can specify exactly how donations made to the city

for park purposes should be spent and, to the extent allowed by law, this donation is tax-deductible. However, the amount of money actually donated by the Chico community to the park is miniscule. Some goods and services are occasionally provided by Chico businesses, but this doesn't amount to much either. While Enloe Hospital has received millions in donations over the last few years, direct donations to Bidwell Park have been considerably less, in perhaps the \$10-20,000 range during the same time period.

One might argue that Chicoans instead contribute to the park's welfare by volunteering in the park. It's true that there are a number of organizations that provide volunteer programs within the park. These include Park Watch and VIPS (Volunteers In Police Service), which act as the "eyes and ears" of the park. As they walk or ride throughout the park, their members look for and report problems, answer questions, and generally provide a watchful presence. Their time provides a significant majority of the approximately 18,000 park volunteer hours last year. These two programs have a total of about 150 volunteers.

The Chico Cat Coalition rescues cats and kittens that have been dumped in the park, provides care and finds them new homes. Their work benefits the park by protecting the wildlife species that would otherwise be injured or killed by these cats (not to mention providing a high-quality and long life to animals that otherwise would have a short and painful one). Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance volunteers test the creek's water quality and have been trying for years to get a grant to repair the Iron Canyon Fish Ladder. These two groups have dedicated volunteers, but are few in number.

What about groups which provide hands-on park labor? Butte Environmental Council's annual *Bidwell Park and Creeks of Chico Cleanup* attracts about 50-75 volunteers for the park cleanup segment. The *California Native Plant Society Mt. Lassen Chapter* provides about 100 volunteer hours a year for Spanish broom removal in Upper Park. *Streaminders* relies on volunteers to plant and maintain their 2 small restoration sites in Lower Park. CSU, Chico's annual *Scour and Devour* service project provides about 150 students for 2-3 hours. One segment of the *Kids and Creeks* elementary school educational program is invasive plant removal in Bidwell Park and replanting with native plants. They provide several hundred hours of volunteer labor to the park annually. A mountain biking group, the *Tuesday/Thursday Ride Club*, has adopted a couple of the south side trails and works on them as needed. The *Park Division* itself offers trail maintenance volunteer days in the spring and fall, but only rarely does anyone show up to help. The group I work with, *Friends of Bidwell Park*, contributed 2850 hours of on-site volunteer labor last year, primarily removing

invasive plants and picking up trash. Most of these hours came from a couple of very large group projects and the rest from a small group of dedicated individuals who toil week after week.

In all, I estimate that fewer than 250 people volunteer in Bidwell Park on a regular basis, with another 400-500 mostly students participating in one-time community service activities. This is a dismal show of support for a resource that is supposedly so beloved by Chico.

Maybe this lack of financial and physical support by the community would not matter so much, except that Bidwell Park has a huge backlog of deferred maintenance amid increased park usage. There are serious erosion problems, both on the trails and off. Invasive plants, such as vinca, privet and ivy, have smothered Lower Park's understory vegetation and other invasives, like starthistle and European olive threaten Middle and Upper Parks. There's no plan for fire management in the park's various vegetation zones or money to implement such a plan. There's never been a comprehensive assessment of the park's flora and fauna, which is essential to have as a baseline for monitoring the park's future health. Sycamore Pool needs \$2.1 million in repairs and upgrades in order to continue to function as Chico's main swimming facility. If, like the children's game where each child decides how he or she would hypothetically spend a large sum of money, someone gave a million dollars to the park and it had to be spent immediately, there would be no shortage of ways to spend that money.

So, Chico seems to have a split personality regarding Bidwell Park. They love to use it, boast about it, and write about it. They may not want to spend more of their tax dollars on it (at least not in ways that can be identified as a separate fee or tax), although the City Council has been reluctant to even ask the question. It also appears that they don't want to make personal financial or time commitments to help the park or perhaps that they just don't think that it needs any extra help. After all, it's survived for 100 years without a lot of public support. Crown Jewel? Stepchild? I guess it depends on your perspective.

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# Conservation

## Lake Davis Rotenone Plan: Will It Succeed and At What Cost?

Report by Joseph A. Abbott

On January 19, 2006, the Yahi Group of the Sierra Club hosted a debate over rotenone use to eliminate Lake Davis' Northern Pike. Department of Fish and Game (DFG) representatives Julie Cunningham, DFG Portola Field Office Environmental Scientist, and Ed Part, DFG Fish Biologist and Director of the Lake Davis Pike Eradication Project, backed repeating rotenone application to eradicate Pike from the lake, thus indirectly protecting downstream fisheries. My "devil in details" approach dramatized the multitude of unresolved ecological, economic and health consequences in repeating rotenone poisoning.

At the meeting, I stated DFG's solution for Lake Davis Northern Pike eradication was ecologically problematic and economically flawed, and that DFG's goal of protecting California's downstream fisheries is neither surefire and realistic, nor safe for human or even fish health. I emphasized that Northern Pike are a potential but not immediate threat to California's fisheries, and elimination procedures and their ramifications must be better thought out.

What are we talking about in real numbers? How much money has been and will be spent, and how much economy could be lost? Portola's population went from 2,200 to 1,600 due to lost business after DFG's first poisoning, and there are no plans to compensate the town as was done after the first poisoning. No economic studies are planned to assess the effects of DFG's second round of rotenone poisoning on Portola. Assuming Pike migration, the economic effects on downstream fisheries are unknown. So far, treatments and compensations have already cost DFG over \$20 million, and that does not yet include the upcoming budget for DFG's second planned application.

Sport and commercial fisheries in San Francisco Bay, the Delta and lower Sacramento River have been in steep decline since 1950, with 95% of the fishery already lost. And this decline continues accelerating from warming water due to lack of timely release of cold water from upstream dams, global warming, more fish-toxic pesticide runoff from residential and commercial development adjacent to the Feather and Sacramento River riparian zones, recent neurotoxic algae blooms destroying the Delta



*A freshly caught Lake Davis Northern Pike is ready for take out.*

fishery, and increased pumping to Southern California and Central Valley Westlands agribusiness. The latter permits salt water intrusions farther into the Delta. DFG's claim of eradication being urgent is shortsighted and self-serving, considering the multiple other problems impacting northern California's fisheries.

Any rotenone formulation used by DFG will likely include dispersing agents comprised of hydrocarbons and naphthalene, both serious toxins. DFG's exact rotenone formulation remains undisclosed, but would likely combine liquid and powder. The latter, being airborne, is most hazardous to human health. Rotenone is classified as an agropesticide, and its known toxicity has been inadequately studied in humans. There is new evidence that rotenone is harmful to human neurological systems, being implicated in causing Parkinson's disease. And DFG's environmental study itself listed 30% of 82 ecological species as suffering "potentially significant (adverse) impact" due to rotenone use. Just read the label on a can of rotenone; it makes for some frightening reading.

DFG's rotenone plans for Lake Davis involve repeated applications to moving water which will widely disperse the poison and so make eradication efforts less reliable. DFG plans necessitate distribution by boat as well as ATV, which serves to churn up dust and make airborne any rotenone-impregnated dirt or mud, and by helicopter which involves aerial spraying. These methods are direct health threats to humans and mammals, birds and insects that might be downwind of the treatment sites.

Forty-nine sensitive wildlife species are listed in the *Initial Study*, DFG's environmental assessment. One species is Federally endangered (Carson Wandering Skipper), two are Federally threatened (California Red Legged Frog and Bald Eagle), 32 are of Federal Concern, two are of Federal Local Concern, and 15 are of US Forest Service Concern. Three species are State endangered (Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle and Great Gray Owl), six are State threatened

(Swainson's Hawk, Willow Flycatcher, Sandhill Crane, Bank Swallow, Wolverine and Red Fox. And rotenone is classified as a moderately hazardous Class II agropesticide by the World Health Organization (WHO) with studies showing toxicity in rodents, rabbits, dogs, and pigs. (Pigs are a physiologically close relative to humans.) Additionally, rotenone could again poison Grizzly Creek's fishery, which is directly downstream of the Lake Davis dam gates. After the first DFG application there was seepage from the closed gates and rotenone escaped into the creek, killing many fish and resulting in a wretched stench throughout the entire Grizzly Canyon. That misstep resulted in a hefty \$250,000 water quality fine against DFG.

This time around, DFG speculates it will avoid downstream creek contamination by securely closing the dam gates at the lake and confining rotenone application to a small "minimum" pool to ensure no rotenone escapes. However, DFG's treatment protocol requires repeated applications to the minimum pool and all streams and tributaries flowing into the lake to ensure the poison's success. Completely securing dam closure to prevent the chance of rotenone escape downstream would necessarily repeat the trout-kill in Grizzly Creek, due to its total de-watering. (The lake is the creek's sole water source). De-watering is a violation of DFG's own Fish Code (#5937) which requires protection of the creek's Public Trust interest: the trout. My question is this: Do multiple and widespread applications increase the risk for another rotenone misadventure? It's a dilemma that makes DFG appear it's riding toward another train wreck.

The Plumas National Forest (PNF) treatment area, including Lake Davis, is owned by the U.S. Forest Service. The rotenone area includes specially protected PNF wildlife habitat zones which somehow must be quarantined from poisoning. Even with new DFG permutations designed to minimize failure and ensure success, the treatment area is huge, because the second rotenone application would include both the lake and the lake's extensive tributary system within the PNF. The planned rotenone treatment area of 44 square miles is massive, approaching the size of San Francisco (46 square miles).

The initial rotenone application to Lake Davis was an American first, as rotenone application had never been used to eradicate fish from human drinking water. After DFG promised the poison would be gone in days, testing revealed hydrocarbon contamination weeks afterward. No wonder no one from Portola will eat fish caught in the lake or drink its water. And long-term effects of rotenone in a drinking water reservoir and cumulative effects upon human health are not clearly known. In addition, efforts to obtain bioaccumulation data in Lake Davis fish after DFG's first application were thwarted because relevant fish samples were never analyzed. But that's not the end of toxic chemicals. To neutralize their multiple rotenone applications, DFG plans to

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## Lake Davis Plan (con't from p. 10)

use Potassium Permanganate, another chemical known to be hazardous to human health.

Is there a better plan? I cannot offer any

*(continued on p. 11)*

panacea to replace DFG's rotenone application, but I offer four items for serious consideration. My preference is complete de-watering of Lake

Davis combined with dam removal, but even temporary de-watering is ecologically healthier than massive poisoning. However, de-watering while awaiting the death of the Pike takes patience, and that conflicts with DFG's desire to get Lake Davis on-line as soon as possible for political and economic reasons.

I propose construction of a simplified water treatment plant and storage facility for Portola, tapping water from the Middle Fork of the Feather River, which runs right through the town. Reliable drinking water would resolve Portola's greatest health concern, i.e., restoration of potable water. A river treatment plant and storage tanks are a much cheaper solution to obtain safe drinking water than the millions sought to refit the outdated and presently unusable Lake Davis treatment plant that used to supply the town, or drilling more wells to replace those becoming contaminated with arsenic.

Any DFG plan must include financial compensation to Portola, because either rotenone application or de-watering result in lost dollars. Moreover, it is urgent to seek alternate industry to restore Portola's prosperity and growth. None of this is in the DFG plan, which is primarily a siren's call for Pike eradication. This bodes ill for the town's – and the area's – economic future.

Research is urgently needed to determine why the prior Frenchman Lake rotenone poisoning was successful and the first Lake Davis project failed. Such analysis was never done, nor are there plans to do ongoing assessments with the second round of poisoning, so sure is DFG of success. But what if this repeat performance fails? What will we have learned, and could we face a third rotenone project in a few years? Sure, let's get the Pike out of Lake Davis, but with minimal risk to ourselves and our environment. We must ensure the best chance of success but at the least risk, and that's going to require a systematic approach that also recruits the most outstanding minds and ideas for this

## Those Negative Conservationists!

By Rex Burress

The essence of this article was motivated by writer Michael Whiteley of the Mercury-Register of Oroville and an article he wrote, "Speaking of Negativity, and Those Who Are Negative." A half page was devoted to hashing this subject, mostly being negative about those who are negative, but in the end he does allow that a "balance" is desirable and "negative occurrences have their place in the world."

Often a conservation effort begins with negative thoughts about the status quo or endangerment of some particular environmental condition. Being positive is being satisfied with things the way they are, and this thought is often deadly in changing some eroding environmental scenario into something better for wildlife and the future.

I picked up my "negativity" from super conservationist Paul F. Covel, pioneer interpreter who was the first American Municipal Naturalist at Lake Merritt Wildlife Refuge in Oakland, CA. He, with 1948 Oakland Park Superintendent William Penn Mott, Jr., future Director of National Parks, was a prime annoyance to governmental agencies in prodding for park improvements and the establishment of a Nature Center for Oakland. You have to be a real negative nuisance sometimes to make yourself heard in order to generate conversion into positive reforms. Mott, in particular, was a campaigner for parks and the environment, skilled at speaking for park values and persuading officials to commit funds.

Paul was consistently complaining about some environmental destruction going on, and helped organize various groups into being stewards of the land, just as John Muir recognized the threats to Yosemite and the Sierras and helped create the Sierra Club. Paul was a founding member of the California Native Plant Society, San Francisco Bay Conservancy, Western Interpreters Association, National Association of Interpreters, and Friends of Oakland Parks, in addition to being a staunch member of the Audubon Society and other nature-minded organizations. Most of these groups were developed because of a love for all things bright and beautiful . . . particularly national wonders being threatened by some developmental project.

The Audubon Society was started to help save birds whose feathers were being used for

ladies' hats! Egret plumes for hats nearly wiped out the species! If we didn't have objectors and watchdogs and nature crusaders to counter greedy land and resource users, much of our environment would be altered, stripped of species, or utilized for commercial gain.

The land and money grab goes on. John Muir said, "The battle for conservation will go on endlessly. It is part of the universal warfare between right and wrong." Today we see the battle being waged even more intensely against the Bush Administration's efforts to apparently squeeze economical gains out of wildlands regardless of long-term consequences to American resources. We see it in the constant erosion of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Endangered Species Act. Those acts were put in place by people who cared. We see it in the all-out attack on an established National Wildlife Refuge in the Arctic, an attack that, if successful, will set a precedent in invading other refuges and parks for minerals, oil and lumber.

Changing attitudes and establishing federal protection have been a long hard battle, and we see those efforts being eroded away. Environmental protectors stand on the shoulders of ecological giants, those who have had the vision to speak up when nature's values are endangered. Intelligent leaders, particularly Theodore Roosevelt, have been able to balance needs and preserve a healthy segment of wilderness and scenic wonderlands. If not for men like Muir and Roosevelt, Yosemite would be wall-to-wall condos and marketplaces today, and the Sierra would be one big city.

There is a long list of people who expressed "negativity" about certain detrimental progress procedures and defended nature. Aldo Leopold, Roger Tory Peterson, Edwin Way Teale and a host of others are some who spoke in favor for a healthy earth and whose footsteps nature advocates and parkland devotees follow today.

John Muir said, "No matter into what depths of degradation humanity may sink, I will never despair while some of the lowest can love the pure and the beautiful and know it when they see it . . . I care to live only to entice others to look at nature's loveliness with understanding . . . In God's wildness lies the hope of the world . . . Brought into right relationships with the wilderness, man would see that his appropriation

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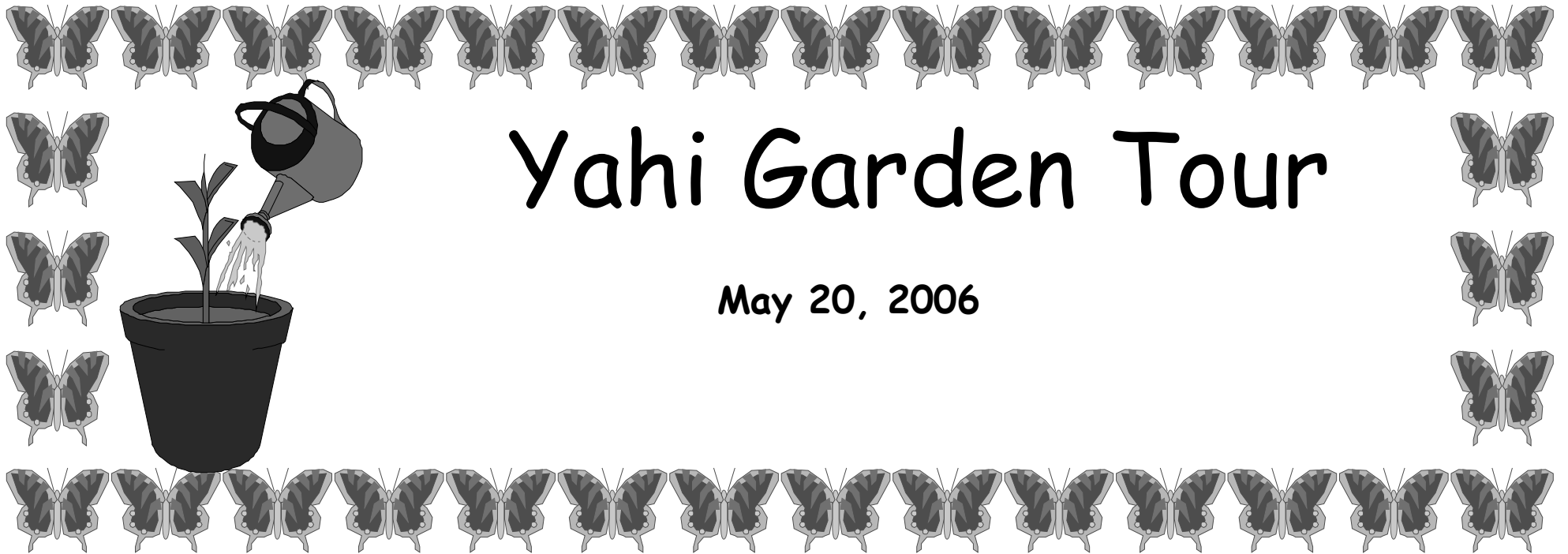
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