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Yahi Winter 2015/2016 Outings and Events

Coordinated by Alan Mendoza

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

A Ride Through Jurassic Park

By Celeste Garcia, Yahi Group ExCom Co-Chair

This August my husband and I took a five-day rafting trip down the Green River in Utah with the Sierra Club. Traveling through Nevada and Utah, our destination was Vernal, Utah. Traversing these states we passed bomb trains, coal power plants, pump jacks and fracking wells. One fracking well was located in someone's backyard! Vernal, Utah, is one of the fastest growing boomtowns in Utah, as was evident by its change since we visited in 2010 on a similar rafting trip. There were several more large hotels, stores, car dealerships and a Halliburton branch office. The area has one of the largest deposits of natural gas in the country and large deposits of Gilsonite which is used in oil drilling mud.

We had a great leader, Jenny Moon, who has two degrees in Geology. She arranged for a pre-trip tour at a local museum. We got to see how the field researchers excavate, analyze and prepare fossils. The following day our rafting journey began at the Gates of Lodore. Through the process of uplifting and erosion, layers of prehistoric formations from Precambrian, Paleozoic and Mesozoic eras are now exposed on the surface. As we rafted down the Green River it was as if we were going back in time. Receding seas 280 million years ago left remnant sea life deposited in the Weber sandstone. The Mesozoic era (65-250 million years ago) is when the fossils were deposited, now exposed for discovery.

One of our rafting guides encountered a woman in Vernal who criticized his profession as one of the reasons her company couldn't place a gas pipeline in Dinosaur National Monument. He countered citing tourism as a more lucrative infusion of money into the local economy than fossil fuel extraction. We should do everything in our power to preserve this beautiful monument.

Yahi Club News

Online Ballots for Yahi Group ExCom Elections

It is time to vote for people to represent them on the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the local Yahi group of the Sierra Club. This year we have two candidates: Annette Carey and Sharon Fritsch

Yahi members will receive a link to their ballot in an e-mail from the Yahi Group. Read the Candidates' Statements, and show your support by printing the ballot and voting. The ballot is designed to be folded into quarter size with the Yahi address showing. Tape it closed, add your stamp and mail it by December 31, 2015. Please take a few minutes to participate in this important process.

Yahi Holiday Party

By Suzette Welch



FRIDAY DECEMBER 18, 2015 will be the date of our annual Holiday Potluck. Once again it is to be held at Valley Oaks Village, 1950 Wild Oak Lane, Chico, Ca. Party starts at 5:30 PM. Limited parking so please carpool. Bring your own beer and wine. There will be a \$5 fee for room rental and cleanup.

After dinner we are going to have a talk given by Richard Burrill. The title of the talk is **Some of Ishi's Secrets Shared**. Mr. Burrill is an Ishi scholar and is the author of a number of books about Ishi and the Maidu Indians. He will be offering for sale a compilation of several of his books which are currently out of print.

The annual Holiday Party is a good time to visit with old friends and meet some new people. So bring your favorite dish and plan to have a pleasant evening.

If you plan on attending, please notify Suzette Welch by e-mail bookson-tape@rocketmail.com or phone 530-342-9214 stating number of people in your party and what you plan to bring.

A Special Thank You, Laura Grossman

The Yahi Group wishes to recognize Laura Grossman for a very generous donation to the Sierra Club. Laura is a former Yahi ExCom member and past Chairperson. Her contribution will be used to support worthy projects in the Yahi area.

Yahi supports local environmental campaigns, activist participation in larger efforts, other environmental non-profits in our area and general environmental education, such as this newsletter and our program of donating documentary films to area public libraries.

Thank you, Laura, for your generosity and support.

Yahi Conservation Report

By Grace Maria Marvin, Yahi Group Conservation Chair

Some key points made at 10/11/15 Water Committee of the Sierra Club*:

1- The Water Bond that CA voters passed:

S. C. has taken positions against new construction related to the following dams or reservoirs: Shasta, Temperance Flats, and Sites. a) Temperance Flats could be an illegal diversion, and Shasta has been removed as a Cal-FED project. b) Sites would be an off-stream reservoir for the Sacramento River, but the canals to take the water are not big enough to fill the reservoir. c) Metropolitan Water District is planning to purchase islands in the Delta to convert them to reservoirs; but the yield would be relatively small and the engineering challenges are huge. d) The S.C. has not taken positions on projects at Los Vaqueros and San Luis.

All the dam projects together would cost about \$10 billion, and, if spent, would not allow money for other proposed Water Bond projects; some of those projects would be far more productive in helping to increase accessible water, *e.g.*, conservation, restoring streams, and fixing leaks in current aquifers. *Activists, unite to support such projects!* Regulations for the Water Bond should be out by the time you read this.

2-SGMA: Sustainable Management Groundwater Act (See www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/pdfs/Batch1PublicMtg.pdf At last, CA is developing GW regulations. We should find out how to get interested local parties involved to form GSA's (Groundwater Sustainability Agencies) under SGMA. If we do not do so, the state would take control. If your region's basin is going dry, some say it would be irresponsible not to get your GSA planned, being sure that not just a water hog agency is involved or that a water basin isn't split into separate GSA's. Go to www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/gsa_intent.cfm to see which areas already have filed *Notices of Intent*.

Pointers: a) Well logs are now supposed to be public. b) Nowadays, we can see how we're overusing our GW from outer space! c) There is nothing in SGMA about land use authority, so conflict is inevitable. But if disputes aren't settled by a local GSA, then the state would intervene.

4-*California Water Fix* (the most recent name for the Twin Tunnels project)

This "Fix" no longer has a habitat conservation plan for the Delta. It may be that those private investors who would be needed to fund this project will not do so because the water yield may not be sufficient. The Sierra Club has already taken a position against the Twin Tunnels project and may be signing onto a long and very detailed letter by the Environmental Water Caucus against the "Water Fix."

5) The Westlands Water District's settlement with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is seen by many as a very expensive give away to that District. Congress may not agree to approve this 50 year contract for water. Afterall, signing it would mean Westlands would be allowed to access that water (to sell?), even if they no longer had farms (on what is now very toxic soil).

**Meetings of Sierra Club California and of the California Nevada Regional Conference Committee held on 10/11/15- 10/12/15 in San Luis Obispo.*

River Watcher:

Clean Water for America?

By Rex Burress

The Environment Protection Agency has sought to protect U.S. water resources by establishing the Clean Water Act. Such a rule would seem commendable in lieu of the importance of clean water for life on earth, but the effort has caused intense objections from some land owners and users mainly because managing watersheds often encroaches onto private property.

Keeping water healthy for everyone through regulations to prevent unpermitted discharge of pesticides, fertilizer, sewage, or disturbing the soil around watersheds and established farms, hits directly at agricultural habits detrimental to waterways, habits that have been long established to extend profits. The sense of land ownership is partly an attitude of "I can do what I want with my land." Thirteen states have sought an injunction to prevent the rule from taking effect.

Already California has had some 90% of its wetlands filled for industrial and farming purposes. Just take a look at the Sacramento Valley and see vast fields of cropland with very little space left for trees and wildlife. It is not at all like the Spanish reported in their 1820 exploration of Northern California, when they said its armored forces walked from the Sacramento River to the Chico area and had shade from oak groves nearly all the way. It will not be that way again, but hopefully some refuges can be retained. California Dept Fish and Wildlife Grey Lodge is a prime example.

The thing about water is that it is universal, and what flows through a farm goes on to other communities from stream to stream and reservoir to reservoir to finally reach the ocean before returning to the land in clouds. Much can happen to water in its journey across the land, and contaminating pollutants are not desirable.

In some places, it becomes a virtual dump-ground on the banks of a stream. "The water will wash it away." There could be oil cans in that debris, or even worse, contaminates from drug rendering and other toxics that could flow into major reserves like Lake Oroville. I have seen garbage dumps started along Cherokee Road above the Feather River's Diversion Pool before a clean-up.

The first garbage dump for the town of Oroville, once called Ophir, was near the Feather River in what is now River Bend Park. Nearly all of the mining towns along the river used waterways for their waste material, and gold mining was mostly conducted in the gravels of rivers. It's a wonder that the watersheds survived, but nature is quite resilient and the scars have been covered by plants. The water, however, is sensitive to intrusion of contaminates.

Before “Recology” and garbage control, the Oroville dump grounds was recipient of dumped cans, bottles, and junk in addition to other wastes of ancient vintage stretching all the way back to the coming of Chinese gold seekers in the 1850's. That dump site was ravaged by collectors of antiquity, and trenches were dug right up to the time of park construction. Around the edges of the soccer fields you can still see slivers of shredded glass ware.

At the end of the drought year of 2015, there is concern that the State meets its water saving goals. It is a time of being extra careful that pollution doesn't leak into reduced streams. Clean water for America is for everyone.

“Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground or into the waters, they spit upon themselves. This we know. The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family.

All things are connected...” --Chief Seattle

“The irises in your eyes the tissue of roses the slow giant rocks in mountain hearts were all born flaming locked in the sun as it drifted like a light on dark water.”

--Lawrence Collins

Hiking Butte County

Hiking Butte County is a wonderful field guide to hikes in and around Butte County. It was assembled by the outings leaders in the Yahi Group under the direction of Alan Mendoza. In it you will find descriptions directions, distances and difficulty information for 35 hikes. This is the only book of its type for this area.

You can purchase it for \$11.95 at Trailside Adventures in Paradise and in Chico at Mountain Sports and Lyons Books. Or you can order one directly from Alan for \$10 plus shipping. Contact Alan Mendoza, 891-8789 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net.



River Watcher:

Signs of the Seasons

By Rex Burress

There is no difficulty in finding signs of the season. Signs of nature activity is going on all the time wherever you are.

“Look round a little, and see what is passing uder our very eyes,” so said Thomas Carlyle in the distant past, and environmental entertainment is just as active now as then, even though there are some subtle changes constantly in the landscape. In fact, every venture forth into a new day is wrought with potential wonder and surprises on an Earth that is never still. Only the promise of general patterns in nature retaining reliable basics reassures us that an oak tree will grow like an oak tree, and a scrub jay will look and act like a scrub jay...even though there remains the possibility of rare variations.

Along about September you begin to see an acceleration of leaf fade-and-drop leading into Autumn. The browning started a month early in the drought year of 2015 as trees unload excessive leaves to lighten their burden in the face of less water.

The California Buckeye tree in front of the Feather River Nature Center had totally brown leaves by mid-summer, which is the normal trait of *Aesculus californica*. It is a permanent water-conservation design that also directs added moisture to the all-important seed, but people usually think the tree is dead.

The buckeye business is a sign of the season you can expect, just as there is the annual expectation of migratory birds and salmon returning. Weather extremes such as drought, fire, flood, and a host of other factors can alter the normal pattern of life and death, but there is a standard of internal instructions poised to dominate in times of normalcy.

My nature bent has long been involved with signs of the seasons. Once I lived in the Alamo, CA hills and gathered writing ideas while tromping around Las Trampas Regional Park. In fact, I wrote a weekly nature column of that name for about seven years. “Signs of the Seasons” was published by the San Ramon Valley Herald at the Danville Tri-Valley News office. Editor John Mustard encouraged my nature watching/writing efforts, and I went on to also write “Oakland, Naturally” for 15 years with the Bay Area Montclarion paper, picking up plenty of essay topics by merely watching the trailside, as I do presently with my “River Watcher” column.

Reporter Heather Hacking writes a delightful column, “Sow There,” for the Enterprise-Record, that is essentially a signs of the season subject right in her backyard! She also mentioned August 'drifts of dry leaves blown to the edge of the street,' and, 'another sign of fall is the appearance of bulbs for sale.' Signs of nature are found wherever life stirs. Naturalist John Burroughs said, “You have the whole wealth of the universe at your very doorstep.”

Thus I stepped forth to see what signs of the season I could find on August 26, 2015, in one small segment of Earth around the Feather River Nature Center. The drought is indeed evident in the hills and along the railroad tracks, but the river-fed riparian zone maintains a certain assemblage of green trees and shrubs. Quite evident are the depleted spike-like stalks of the native horseweed, *Conyza canadensis*, that line the road like tiny cornstalks. It is a time of dried stems, seed-case husks, galls on oak leaves, wild grapes, horsetail equisetum, vultures, and surging salmon. Watch!

“Nature gives to every time and season some beauties of its own, and from morning to night, as from the cradle to the grave, it is but a succession of changes so gentle and easy that we can scarcely mark their progress.”

--Charles Dickens

“Blessed are they who see beautiful things in humble places where others see nothing.”

--Camille Pissaro, French Impressionist, 1830-1903

Annual Snow Goose Festival, January 27-31, 2016



Birders and nature enthusiasts of all ages are invited to attend the 17th Annual Snow Goose Festival, one of the premier birding events in California. This action-packed 5-day event celebrates the millions of waterfowl migrating along the Pacific Flyway that call the Northern Sacramento Valley their home during the winter months.

It also gives our local community an opportunity to rediscover the abundant treasures the North State has to offer all year round, from wholesome foods and delectable wines to inspirational artists and gifted musicians. And with the wide variety of engaging youth activities, there truly is something for everyone at the Snow Goose Festival!

Information: 530-345-1865 | info@snowgoosefestival.org | <http://www.snowgoosefestival.org>

YAH! Club Information

Executive Committee

Co-Chair: Suzette Welch, 342-9214, booksontape@rocketmail.com

Co-Chair: Celeste Garcia, 533-2357, celesterdh@mynvw.com

Secretary: Laurel Heath, 343-3290, laur3290@gmail.com

Board Member: Dave McKinney, 570-1342 or daviddryfly@comcast.net

Board Member: Sharon Frisch, safritsch@comcast.net

Committee Chairs and Other Contacts

Representative to Mother Lode: Grace Marvin, 893-1994, g-marvin@comcast.net

Conservation Chair: Grace Marvin, 893-1994, g-marvin@comcast.net

Membership: Gerda Lydon, 343-9277, plydon2948@aol.com

Newsletter: Louise Casey, 872-9159, YAHInews@comcast.net

Newsletter Distribution: Steve Miller, 345-0806 or steveinchico@gmail.com,
and Dave Nopel, 342-4118

Outings: Alan Mendoza, 891-8789, ajmendoza777@comcast.net

Political Chair: Dave Garcia, 533-2357, rangerdave@mynvw.com

Program Chair: Suzette Welch, 342-9214, booksontape@rocketmail.com

Publicity: Skip Augur, 519-4724, wba@acm.org

Treasurer: Paul Krause, 894-2931, paul@paulkrause.com

Yahi Website: Louise Casey, 872-9159, YAHInews@comcast.net

Portola, Greenville, Quincy Point Person: John A. Shower, 284-6856,
theshowers@frontiernet.net

Newsletter Information

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For advertising, contact Celeste Garcia, 533-2357, celesterdh@mynvw.com.

For changes in mailing address or email address, contact Sierra Club Member Services: membership.services@sierraclub.org, or (415) 977-5500.

For submissions, comments, or inquiries, contact Louise Casey, 872-9159, YAHInews@comcast.net. Please include name, phone number, and address with each submittal. Short, single-topic articles are preferred. Deadlines for proposed articles and letters to the editor: February 1, May 1, August 1, and November 1.

Yahi News reserves the right to edit all submissions for reasons of space, clarity and potential libel. The opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Sierra Club or the Yahi Group.

The Last Word



Photo by Marie Scarrin

GOING, GOING... GONE?

Sea turtles date back nearly 90 million years and are among the Earth's oldest surviving species. All 6 species of sea turtles are protected under the Endangered Species Act. Sierra Club has mounted a major effort to defend and preserve threatened habitats before their inhabitants are gone forever.

Help protect our animal friends; because once they're gone, they're gone. Join Sierra Club now.

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2511 Floral Avenue
 Chico, California 95973-2511
 Telephone/Fax: (530) 892-2511
 E-mail: canative@shocking.com

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Tell them if you want to receive only Yahi Group emails, or Yahi Group emails along with Sierra Club national and/or state emails.

John D. Burge, CPA

Certified Public Accountant

17 Williamsburg Lane
 Chico, CA 95926

530 342-3680
 Fax 530 342-3721
johnburgecpa@sbcglobal.net

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